

Science and Mathematics Education Centre

**Looking Up and Out:
Transcending Techniques in Counselling for Grief and Loss with
Philosophy**

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Did philosophy have something to do with it? Every few years Treslove decided it was time he tried philosophy again. Rather than start at the beginning with Socrates or jump straight into epistemology, he would go out and buy what promised to be a clear introduction to the subject — by someone like Roger Scruton or Byran Magee, though not, for obvious reasons, by Sam Finkler. These attempts at self-education always worked well at first. The subject wasn't after all difficult. He could follow it easily. But then, at more or less the same moment, he would encounter a concept or a line of reasoning he couldn't follow no matter how many hours he spent trying to decipher it. A phrase such as 'the idea derived from evolution that ontogenesis recapitulates phylogenesis' for example, not impossibly intricate in itself but somehow resistant to effort, as though it triggered something obdurate and even delinquent in his mind. Or the promise to look at an argument from three points of view, each of which had five salient features, the first of which had four distinguishable aspects. It is like discovering that a supposedly sane person with whom one had been enjoying a perfect normal conversation was in fact quite mad. Or, if not mad, sadistic.

Howard Jacobson, The Finkler Question

Declaration Page

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published by any person except where due acknowledgement has been made.

Signature:

Di — Stow.

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23.3.13

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I am humbled by the love I have received for this major work.

Abstract

This thesis is an interpretive study of the phenomenon of heeding consciousness in the lived experience of a counsellor. Narrative studies of the lives of a counsellor and her clients embrace vulnerability as courage, as strength and will to face adversity, death and loss, and to weep, to wail, to question, to be depressed, to face life once again with resilience. With biographical and autobiographical details, this thesis explores our human capacity to create understandings of historical being. It explores philosophy and literature in ways one might discover what is immanent in the life a counsellor who can be present with those who suffer grief and loss. This involves the narrator-counsellor in questioning technique and theory in counselling by heeding consciousness.

Inquiring into the historicity of self and others requires an ethics of *époché*—ethical, right restraint. Story, history and historical consciousness must be central to acts of counselling. They enfold each person's fore-structures of understanding that shape and determine the ways we see and interpret *in* the world.

In the in-between-ness of questioning the intimate relationships that develop between heeding consciousness and historicity, a forceful question leads the unfolding of this thesis. How is one to conduct and renew oneself as a counsellor? The works of philosophers, psychiatrists, psychologists, architects and photographers greatly assist in unfolding my question, and enfolding within it conscious understandings about the intimate lived experience of counselling those suffering grief and loss. Stories, anecdotes, metaphors, symbols, images, poems and literature colour my text and enrich, I hope, its linguistic possibilities for my reader's engagement with it.

Grief and loss are ultimate situations in life. The inquiry of this thesis reveals another ultimate situation: being as counsellor is primarily being self in genuine conversation with clients, reverently holding humanhood in cupped hands.

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Chapter 1. First, responsibility and humanness

The narratives of the world are without number. ... The narrative is present at all times, in all places, in all societies: the history of narrative begins with the history of [hu]mankind; there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives. —Roland Barthes

I listen to the messages from the nurses at Hobart Private Hospital and I phone back to make a time to meet with the parents who have just lost their baby, or the parents who are waiting to deliver a baby whose life has been deemed "non-viable". It is often the same and yet never the same. I enter the room and the couple look crushed, defeated, sad, and it seems surreal. But had it not been for their desperate situation we would never have met.

I go in as counsellor and what transpires is deeply moving. Some parents want me to say something that will make it all okay, make them feel better. Yet they know nothing can be said to alter what is happening to them. They know there is nothing that can be said at that time that will make a difference. But some things do make a difference. Very often I meet the couple's baby, the dead baby lying in a crib. I greet the parents and the baby. Some parents are holding their baby and pass their baby to me to hold. I cradle the dead baby. The very small baby wrapped in a blanket is peaceful. My voice is soft and sincere when I look up into their faces and say I am so very sorry. I am so very sorry that this is so awful for you. Thank you for having me with you in these circumstances.

I ask them to tell me what has happened. And they tell the story of their pregnancy, about late miscarriage, scans, decisions to deliver the baby early due to abnormalities. Whatever the story, I gently prompt. Did you get pregnant easily or quickly? Did you plan and expect to conceive? How was your pregnancy going along? To ease into talking with them, I ask how long have you been together? Do you work? And say it is good you can be here together. And I talk and make conversation and not as a question and answer, rather gently, encouragingly, enquiring. I am interested in their story. Their crying and anguish

interrupt me. It is not fair, they cry, why us? They ask pragmatically, when should we go back to work?

I share information about a possible memorial service for their baby, an acknowledgement of their baby. I ask where their baby's name came from? I list some names of funeral directors and reassure them that the funeral people are sensitive and helpful. I remind the couple that the nurses will take hand-prints and foot-prints of their baby, and photos of their baby, and a lock of hair, and while that might seem inappropriate or odd right now, I say that they can take these precious mementoes home with them in an envelope and look at them later, much later or not at all, at least they will have them.

I acknowledge their pain. We should not be here in the room together but for the circumstances of their dead baby. This was not the way things were meant to play out.

I ask them if they have slept or eaten. I ask them if any family members or friends have been or are due to visit. I ask them if they have got their baby's room ready at home, or if baby things will be in obvious view when they go home. I wonder with the baby's father if these ought to be moved or if the door to the baby's room be shut before the baby's mother goes home. I say about the possibility of an emotional reaction around leaving the hospital without their baby and invite them to be aware of this and supportive of each other. I acknowledge the strength of their relationship, their heavy hearts, and their grief and disappointment.

I become quiet and we sit in silence then. I stay about forty-five minutes. That is quite a long time and not very long at all. It seems to be about the right amount of time to stay with them.

I go, wishing them well, and I acknowledge their baby again. I tell them about the privilege I feel to have met them and their baby, and offer to meet with them in my rooms later, if they would wish. I leave the room, talk with the nurses, leave the hospital and continue with my day, a little sadder but richer for the experience of talking with those brave people.

Calls for my service come out of the blue, so to speak, very often as I have described. Planning for what I would or ought to do is not possible. My response has to be spontaneous, always.

Over many years, as professional counselling requires, I have written case notes. As I review my records, I perceive the moments when I have read about and practised different psychological and psychotherapeutic approaches, tried and evaluated them and somehow metamorphosed and absorbed them into my own particular way of practising. The changes in my practice, mirror the person who I am, I, who

can see, perceive, hear, sense and act from my existential self. From the beginning, the moment when I embarked on the inquiry which led to this thesis, I committed to work my best for my clients, to become and be the best I could be as I worked with them, to create the best possible conditions in which they could be true to themselves and become the best they could be. Devoting time and attention to studying and practising different psychological approaches has led me to phenomenology. My way of working includes a person-centred approach, positive uncertainty, and studying my clients' lived experience and my own lived experience as a phenomenological task of understanding.

Sandra Simpson's article "Experiencing Phenomenology as Mindful Transformation: An Autobiographical Account" in *Transformative Phenomenology* edited by David Rehorick and Valerie Bentz (2008) inspires me. Though my aspiration is not to be a phenomenologist as Simpson wishes for herself, Simpson's account is like a mirror to that of my self-transformation as a scholar, which, in turn, changes the way I practice as a professional counsellor. Simpson draws attention to the vast amount of documentation available that describes the experience of what individuals face when coming to phenomenology for the first time, and how that is both illuminating and exciting. She also suggests that what is missing in this array of documentation is "a full account of the transformative nature of coming to, sticking with, and then emerging from deep encounters with phenomenological texts, thinkers, and practice" (p.51). Simpson shares her story of setting herself the task of becoming a "hermeneutic phenomenologist", and she highlights the richness of reading extensively about both phenomenology and hermeneutics in order to learn about these traditions and possibilities for linking them together. Simpson, herself scholarly, and on her own journey of transformation, learned from teachers and colleagues and other scholars who have written about both traditions, and created a "reading pathway" for herself (p.52) that centres on phenomenology and hermeneutics as philosophy and practice.

Simpson tells her story about researching and drawing on her deeply personal diary entries, her personal lifeworld of written text developed over some twenty years, and settles on core concepts from her writings. She talks of these concepts as "phenomenological tools of interpretation" (p.56)—meaningful life themes that emerged during her interpretation of her journal writing, "identity moments" (p.62) that she recognises in particular journal entries that were transformational at points

of her analysis, paradoxes that she comes to understand as enlightening and that offer her opportunities to deepen self-awareness, and meditation koans that link her paradoxes to Zen sayings (p.56), a particular interest of hers. She says,

I became a phenomenologist, a writer, and a teacher as a result. I acquired an expanded identity; I see and experience myself differently. I uncovered a self, a being, who was hidden, and acquired new ways of being through learning and practising phenomenology. While I was learning, exploring, and writing, I discovered an authentic way of being in the world that I had glimmers of, but had been unable to manifest, to fully own. (2008, p.62)

The transformative process that Simpson shares emerges mirror-like for me. I have disciplined myself to be diligent in the study of the lived experience of my clients' grief and loss, and my own lived experiences of grief and loss. Deepening my study towards formulating my thesis, I collect, read and reflect upon the influence of authors who teach me to be mindful of my own transforming traditions. In my endeavours to grasp the meaning of texts of phenomenological thinkers, I explore how I might somehow apply the understandings that are given to me and that I retrieve in my lifeworld. With gratitude, I welcome the moments of joy and clarity when some hint of wisdom breaks through in the blurring mist of my thinking into the light of insight.

Valerie Bentz and Jeremy Shapiro (1998), in *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*, emphasise their belief that a researcher's "awareness of and reflection on [her] world, and the intellectual awareness and reflection that are woven into [her] research, affect—or should affect—one another"(p.5). They suggest that

one's research can contribute to the transformation of one's self or identity. We have experienced this ourselves and seen it in our students. We are always noticing how values shape conceptual frameworks, and we believe that research needs to be thought of in connection with all the ways that it is part of the individuals' lives and lifeworlds. (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998, in Simpson, 2009, p.52)

Reading thoughtfully and dialogically about phenomenology as human science inquiry, and attempting to absorb what I apprehend, prepares me, as Simpson does, to open my being-self to a "radically different way of being" (Bentz, 1995, in Simpson, 2008, p.60). During my inquiry, I discover the quality, worthwhileness, perplexity and imperative that challenge me to be, always, in my world, radically. I

am to relate to the fundamental nature of being human, and at the same time, I am to be willing to part from traditions that are both internal and external to my historical being, and allow the ways a study of lived experience might compel me to be thorough and far-reaching in my practice as a counsellor of grief and loss.

On being philosophical, notes Simpson, Francine Hultgren, one of her teachers, quotes one of her students, "Phenomenology is not simply learning a research method. It is truly a 'way of being', a philosophy of life" (1995, in Simpson, 2008, p.52). On understanding what phenomenology is about, Max van Manen, in *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (1990) gives us counsel in this way,

For all phenomenological research, in all its stages, [it] is [necessary] to be constantly mindful of one's original question and thus to be steadfastly oriented to the lived experience that makes it possible to ask the "what it is like" question in the first place. (1990, p.42)

van Manen encourages researchers to explore what it means to be a student of phenomenology, to be mindful, and to understand transformation.

Reading phenomenology can be both intriguing and difficult to understand. It requires me to learn a new language, a nomenclature that allows for thinking in new ways and actually in ways we think we already know. Simpson's observations ring true for me.

As I began to dip into the reading of the early European phenomenologists, I realised that I would read phenomenological philosophy, write about it, and practise it without ever coming to grasp it fully. This is part of its wonder and fascination for me. Phenomenology is mysterious. It appeals to my sense of pleasure in discovery as I continue to catch glimmers of meaning. I am in phenomenology's grasp as surely as I am human. At some deep, and yet unknown, level, I must continue to work. (2008, p.54)

I recall the Heideggerian assurance given to Simpson: the work of phenomenology will never be finished (2008, p.54). And I think of my clients and their stories, and reflect on how their lives will never be the same again after the loss of a loved one, but they will move through their grief and will come to be in a different place because of it. Their lives have been changed forever but, though they may come to be able to think of the loved one with a love that is not accompanied by gut-wrenching grief and awful emotional pain, grief will forever

revisit them. Speaking for myself, my father died some years ago and it is quite some time since I stopped wailing and looking for him on the beach. In moments of solitude, I still find myself weeping quietly for him, the wet of tears rolling down my cheeks.

van Manen suggests that "to do research in a phenomenological sense is already and immediately and always a bringing to speech of something. And this thoughtfully bringing to speech is most commonly a writing activity" (1990, p.32). In *Introduction to Phenomenology* (2004), Robert Sokolowski avers that the term most closely associated with phenomenology is "intentionality" (p.8). In phenomenology 'intending' means developing the conscious relationship we have to an object. The flow of my phenomenological intentionality is towards developing a conscious relationship with my self as counsellor that is my object of study, and with my transforming being and practice that emerges from my study. I aim to deeply understand what the lived experience of being a counsellor discloses to me through bringing speech and thought into interpreting my historical narratives and writing them.

I wish to emphasise that the research, inquiry and interpretive work of my thesis constitutes primarily a phenomenology of the lived experience of a counsellor for those in grief and loss, that is, a human science, philosophical, autobiographical and biographical study of humanly lived experience.

The awful-ness and awe-fullness of grief and loss

I first became involved in grief and loss counselling through the Masters in Counselling Degree I undertook in the late 1990s. I held a placement at the Royal Hobart Hospital, a public hospital in the middle of the city. I worked with Gwenyth, a grief counsellor who was remarkable in her capacity to be with grieving people, help them through the awfulness of grief, and ease their burden even a little. I learned much from Gwenyth and I came to recognise my inner strength and capacity for working with people who are experiencing grief and loss. For the first time I became aware of an original and bountiful source of compassion rousing itself somewhere deep inside me. Now I contribute to community organisations especially Rotary International, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome

associations, and the Cancer Council, volunteering my skills and expertise, business management, human resources, coaching, mentoring, and of course professional counselling. I work with people from all walks of life who are recovering from disasters, both personal and natural, and who are achieving amazing feats of strength amidst everyday challenges.

Karl Jaspers, in *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*, reminds us that in our daily lives we forget that we must die, forget our guilt, and forget that we are at the mercy of chance. In happy situations we rejoice at our strength, we are thoughtlessly confident—we know nothing but our actuality. In pain and weakness we despair. But if we come out of this situation alive, we let ourselves slip back into forgetfulness of self and a life of happiness (1966, pp.21-23).

Yet, grief and loss injures us, as human beings, often implacably. I desire to help others and myself make our way through hurting days that relentlessly draw us onwards through life, through days in which we learn that we can never bring back those we have lost, or identities we have had to let go. Grief and loss does something that transforms people and I am humbled to be with my clients through this. As I write, I write my clients and my self.

I choose experiences of grief and loss from my counsellor records for the particular purpose of describing and understanding what lived experiences of grief disclose to me about the conscious relationship I develop with the counsellor who is my self. I draw from invitations that have been extended to me from parents who have lost babies pre-natally to sit and talk with them in their first few days of disbelief, shock, agony or exhaustion, and later, perhaps weeks or months, as they readjust their lives—for instance, with Laura, whose baby is born too early for viable life; with Sam and Lisa, a couple devoted to each other, who grieve faithfully within their family tradition, reservedly, "doing grief the right way," till they crash after an attempted holiday; and with Sony and Carlota, in their agony over the gross abnormality of their baby's foetus during five bizarre days when the hospital attempted to induce the birth of their baby, experimenting, it seemed to them, with different drugs until induction was "successful," and their dead baby entered the world. In other cases I draw from stories of adults grieving, like Thomas' despair over his sister's death, the loss of laughter, and happy family times whilst he sees others moving on in ways he cannot; and Amanda, bereft when she loses herself as well as her partner and his family with whom she had close ties.

In the last few years, claims Michael Berman, in *Parenthood Lost: Healing the Pain after Miscarriage, Stillbirth, and Infant Death*, “awareness, compassion, intervention, and counselling have become the paradigm for managing pregnancy loss and stillborn babies” (2001, p.xvii). Amongst the most painful losses we can experience are the countless losses of mothers and fathers and those close to them who grieve, over the loss of their pregnancies, newborns, and children. Seeking release from their sorrow, they cry and yearn for solace and hope, many times for years following their loss; their cries are but a “muted weeping of despair” as a child so longed for is not born, or is not born alive, or cannot be conceived. Pained by these losses, they see their lives as devoid of hope. Yet they prevail, for within each of us is a timeless, enduring spark of hope that permits us to challenge adversity and courageously face unexplainable suffering (pp.xvii-xix). Like Berman, I would like my work in counselling to bring understanding and insight to those who grieve.

Encounters

In earlier days, my counselling practice agitated me into being technically correct as my teachers and colleagues coached me. In time, phenomenology came to me and insisted that, thoughtfully, mindfully, I bring my studies of lived experience into writing. The way I studied changed. In Sokolowski’s *Phenomenology of the Human Person* (2008), I learned about what it might mean to be a seeker of truth, an agent of truth, in unrelenting pursuit of understanding the human condition when grief shakes us to the roots of our being, and when we want to “attain the truth of things” (pp.20-21). Hans-Georg Gadamer says the only way to experience truth is to live with it. “The mind is an infallible guide to truths about the external world” (Lawn, 2006, p.60).

Encounters with practical wisdom and truth are lived experiences. Chris Lawn, who helps us to be less overwhelmed by the complexity of Gadamer’s philosophy, in *Gadamer: A Guide for the Perplexed*, warns that truth and experience are slippery words (Lawn, 2006, p.61). We might attempt to theorise aspects of an experience when we experience the same thing happening over and again because it appears to be repeatable. Our theory weakens when we find we are unable to replicate it. In my counselling work I continue to be surprised by what is unique, and what is novel, and what has not happened before. I have moments of pulled-up-shortness, when I am surprised and pulled-up-short in novel and unique ways. I get

taken out of my taken-for-granted-ness. To generalise about my clients' reactions to the adversity of their life circumstances would be pretending truthfulness.

A good person knows she has to act or refrain from acting in a certain way, but never reflects in advance upon the appropriate response. Being good is a relatively unreflective matter (Lawn, 2006, p.134). In relationships, in the case of counsellor and client, we go with what we find is, intrinsically, a good way to act or refrain from acting. Yet, as I come to awareness of my human agency, I can deliberately practise philosophical reflection about the ways my living discloses wisdom to me. In my practice as counsellor, I aim to find ways that my clients might reflect upon their living and their lifeworlds so that truth and wisdom might disclose themselves to them in moments of living. This *ethos* of human agency is one that I embrace. When I refer to the authority of my clients and of any other persons who appear in the pages of my thesis, this *ethos* demands that I respect the right to autonomy and the originality of each individual, as well as the right to privacy and confidentiality of each of my clients.

As I learn to unfold the intentionality of my thesis, I draw insight and understanding from philosophers including Gadamer, Edmund Husserl, Karl Jaspers, Roland Barthes, Paul Tillich and Rollo May; philosopher-psychiatrist-writers like Irwin Yalom, Emmy van Deurzen and Victor Frankl; phenomenologists such as van Manen, and Sokolowski; psychologists such as Carl Rogers; H.B. Gellatt, philosopher of positive uncertainty; and J. William Worden, researcher on stages of grief. I find myself eager to delve into parts of their work to discover their thinking, find some kind of resonance, or not, between one mind and another and mine, and then to struggle with reason to write what meanings and how the meanings that the relationships I develop with them reverberate in my thesis.

I am grateful to van Manen who leads me in new directions to new possibilities for understanding in ways I have not met before. For instance, he leads me to the works of Roland Barthes. This thesis is not the place for a full study of Barthes' works, just as it is not for Gadamer's. But it does allow space for guidance from biographers and commentators who have an intimate knowledge of an author's life and work and prepares my access to an author's primary writings when they become critically relevant to understanding the work of my inquiry. I draw for

example, from Graham Allen's *Roland Barthes* (2003), and Jonathan Culler's *Barthes: A Very Short Introduction* (2002).

Muse and metaphor



In recent years I have become particularly passionate about the art and craft of mosaics. I have been creating patterns for decorative pots, and together with a friend, we created the piece of mosaic art one can see in the photograph below; it is representative of the seasons—summer, autumn, winter, and spring. I revelled in looking at and exclaiming over mosaic work when I was walking in northern Spain early last year—walls, flagstones and other eye-catching creations. Even in North Hobart, Tasmania, where I live, mosaics feature as intriguing additions to the footpaths in the main street. I look for particular mosaics that might help me create some poetics in my thesis and help me in some metaphorical way with my thinking and writing.

Once, when I was what seemed to me to ways I thought me, my husband it is a profound support and phenomenological transformation.



in the throes of despair over be my incapacity to transform in phenomenology was pointing created a heart mosaic. For me, statement of my husband's encouragement for my inquiry and will to self-

The word mosaic comes from the ancient Greek word *mous*, a muse. If I muse with my work as a mosaic, I can bring fragments, colours and textures of lived experience into unforeseen patterns that might combine with other patterns, and surprise us unpredictably, calling our attention to the most subtle of messages. When a message draws our attention, we are to interpret it. Simpson recalls as “moments” messages that draw her attention to instances when she understands that a message tells her something about her unique identity, dignity and integrity

as a person. Highlighting her “identity moments” she finds ways to bring the fragments of her self into poetic synchronicity (p.62).

The Greek word *poiesis*, means to make or to bring something forth. Many philosophers draw upon its meaning from ancient Greek texts—Thomas Alexander, Martin Heidegger, Jim Garrison, Gadamer and many others. Robert Cavalier in a Symposium article, “The Nature of *Eros*” (Retrieved 26/2/13), refers to the meaning of *poiesis* given to Socrates by the priestess, Diotima.

Diotima ... describes how mortals strive for immortality. In all begetting and bringing forth upon the beautiful there is a kind of making or *poiesis* ("poetry" in the wide sense of "creating").

The act of *poiesis* invites both my self and my clients to bring forth something new from the fragmented moments of grief unforeseen. The possibility of making lives anew offers us ways of putting puzzling moments together into a new whole. And in terms of the mosaic analogy of fragments and wholes, whole tiles are all cracked up into unrepeatable shapes, and yet each fragment is a fragment of experience, and experience can have more than one meaning. I have not looked at it in this way before. Yet I sense I can access a supple intellectual mind, mine, that can poetically amplify mosaic as a metaphorical thread that weaves through my thesis.

Metaphor comes to form the backbone of my thesis. It is its spine, my spine. As Laurel Richardson, in *Writing Strategies: Reaching Diverse Audiences* (1990) suggests, metaphor, like a bodily spine, “bears weight, permits movement, links parts together into a functional, coherent whole—and is not immediately visible” (l.166). In this introductory chapter, I do not wish to foreshadow all the metaphors that form the spine of my thesis. I wish rather to hold my reader’s imagination in suspense until the metaphor emerges in the space and temporality of the unfolding understanding I hope to convey. I wish only to ask of my readers to consider the metaphor as a means of understanding and experiencing one kind of thing as symbolic of another.

Reason and narrative

Many would claim that questioning and conversation leads to wisdom. Over a number of years I have worked with the person-centred approach, positive

uncertainty, and phenomenology. Each of these ways has contributed to the coming together of me as person, as counsellor. I bring all of this together when I am working with clients so that we have, as Gadamer names it, in *Truth and Method*, “genuine conversation” (1989, p.383). Yet, I am acutely aware that something crucial has been absent from my practice and from my understanding, particularly my self-understanding. Often bewilderment with relations between my self and others and between my self and my self has fogged up my reasoning. If I am to study in a phenomenological way my experience of being a counsellor and who I am as a counsellor, I must work through what confounds me. Throughout my thesis I will return often to tackle the essential meaning of the intentionality I bring to this thesis. I am to find out through the unfolding of my thesis and in this I am required to be modest and patient. I ask my reader to be with me in this. Philosopher Roland Barthes upholds the reader's right to read idiosyncratically, for what he or she can get. He is not as interested as literary critics might be in recovering what authors thought or meant. Rather, according to Culler, “Barthes champions the reader and promotes literature that gives the reader an active, creative role” (2002, p.2). I hope my writing is enough so that my reader will be active and engage creatively with my thesis.

Sokolowski helps me to launch my quest in this first chapter. First, we “must exercise responsibility and truthfulness if we are to be human” (2000, p.4). There are many stories of my work with clients that I offer as evidence about the way things are in counselling. Why do I select the stories I tell? Apart from them forming a large part of my work, I select them because they are poignant and give sharpness to acts of illustrating events of grief and loss. That a number of my stories are about the deaths of babies in utero or at birth must be testament to the trust that doctors, nurses and others in the community have given to me. I often find myself in the birthing wards of public hospitals and private maternity units. In my inquiry I search for why this is so. I do not select 'clinical' case studies for my purposes in this thesis.

My inquiry reveals layers of self, transforming as a scholar and as a professional counsellor. The transforming emerges through the stories of my clients, their lived experiences of grief and loss, and mine, and my efforts to grasp the texts of phenomenologists and allow them to alter my philosophical attitude to my lifeworld. With insight from Donald Polkinghorne, in *Narrative Knowledge and the*

Human Sciences (1998), that supports the validity of the way I arrange the material of this thesis, I can say my narratives cross time (p.63). They are not told in chronological order, rather told diachronically, across or through time. My thesis portrays my clients and my self in transit, so to speak. The noun 'transition' refers to a period of changing from one state or condition to another. It comes from the Latin verb *transire*, to go across. Moving across and through time diachronically, grief and loss changes us. Experiences of grief and loss are the subjects of unfinished stories I tell from my counselling records and diary notes.

According to Sokolowski, "phenomenology insists that identity and intelligibility are available in things, and that we ourselves are defined as the ones to whom such identities and intelligibilities are given" (2000, p.4). Next I must have faith that in every story, in the evidence of the way things are, there are identities and intelligibilities. It is my task to discover them as they appear to me, "as datives of disclosure" (p.4). Then I can think of how things appear to me as experience and in this thinking understand myself. Sokolowski tells us that this sort of self-understanding is phenomenology: "phenomenology is reason's self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects" (p.4).

In phenomenology, my study of lived experience has the intentionality of self-discovery. Intentionally concerned with studying the lived experience of my counselling years, of being and becoming engaged as a professional counsellor for people whom grief and loss have torn, disturbed and confused, I intentionally bring reason to the conscious relationship I develop with my being-self as a counsellor. Through writing this thesis, I disclose how my intentionality discloses itself to me.

For me, narrative is a mode of representing identity and intelligibility. It is also a mode of reasoning: it is a way whereby we can apprehend the world we live and participate in. In this and in the chapters that follow, the mode of narrative energises the unfolding of understanding in my thesis. It gives me powerful access to depict the grief and loss that absorbs my being in my work and the relations I develop with my clients. Writing narrative draws me into the uniqueness of human experience through writing everyday happenings, autobiography and biography. Imagery, metaphor, poetry and photography are literary devices that become available to me as poetics for exposing and disclosing the phenomenology of my study.

The way I organise the narratives of my study is to be faithful to the tone of my writing—one that is honest, fair and reasonable and holds me responsible for its coherence. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 illustrate my encounters with theories and techniques for counselling that were revealed to me during the university courses of my training and through the professional development programs I was required to undertake as a member of the professional association which accredits me to practise as a counsellor with clients. As I revisit those times from where I now find myself, many years later, I cannot help but treat my earnest attempts to apply them in practice with tender scepticism and irony, no matter how much I treasure the experiences they led me through.

From novice to didact, to exponent of theory, to admirer of heroic counsellors and researchers I trace and expose aspects of my developing self, awareness and mindfulness with which I approached my clients. As the chapters proceed, through traditions of manualised, mechanised therapy techniques and phased models of grief and loss, I set a broad landscape of counselling therapy that was and is still widely used today in the counselling profession.

Chapter 5 discovers a capacity for deeply heeding consciousness of my being and doing, speaking and listening and introduces me to thick possibilities that phenomenology has for me and other practitioners to slip through different modalities of counselling leaning towards the truth of things. Chapter 6 explores the richness of life resources, in literature, poetry, philosophy, photography and art that I can possess to enlighten and invigorate the unfinishing quest to find my being-self as counsellor in this thesis.

In Chapter 7 I devote my inquiry to unfolding understanding of language as technology and its extension to language as *techné*. In Chapter 8, I heed poetic consciousness and find my way into applying my understandings according to my capacity for self-understanding and understanding others. The poetics of narrative overtakes technique, surpasses method, validates truthfulness and vitalises courage. Next I heed “effective encounters with historical consciousness”, following Jaspers and Gadamer, in Chapter 9, and themes emerge of individual existence, the concreteness and finitude of being human, fore-structures of understanding, tradition, fusion of horizons, dialogue and application. In my last chapter, two particular symbols disclose themselves to me unexpectedly and spontaneously and permit me to draw into a kind of unity that celebrates my intentionality.

Writing as a moral act

To write myself is to write others. Choosing to write about others is a moral undertaking. This first chapter requires me to place the stance and tone of my narrative writing before my reader. The intentionality of my thesis insists that I place myself at the centre of it. My task is to ensure that self-centredness is absent from the tone of this thesis. When I write myself explicitly into the text I assume authority for myself. When I write the narratives of the lives of others, I write from my point of view as a counsellor, open to what others might teach me about my self as a counsellor. It is with the truthfulness of assuming that one can never be another that I write. I do not have the right to speak on behalf of others. I can though, charged with moral responsibility, narrate the lives of others from my point of view. As Richardson points out,

Writing is a moral site. Any moral site is a site of intentionality. We can choose to write so that the voice of those we write about is respected, strong and true. Ironically, this kind of writing also contributes to the credibility of our own interpretive voice. Stated this way, writing strategies are not just literary or scientific choices: they are moral decisions. (1990, 1.438)

I opt for writing with a tone that permits me to implicitly reveal the moral attitude of my intentionality. I temper the tone of my work with symbols, images, metaphors, quotations from a person's experience, selections of what people say and do, and poetry. I aim to quell any authority over writing for others, and any perception of too much self-centredness.

To write in an attitude of consciousness is to amplify the intentionality of my thesis. Most of the time in our natural attitude to the world, as Sokolowski explains, we go about our business unconsciously—we open doors and avoid bumping into people, we drink coffee, we drive, we hold unreflective conversations and so on. We are not always reflectively conscious of our relation to the world.

In a selection from Maurice Merleau-Ponty's, *The Phenomenon of Perception* in Thomas Baldwin's *Maurice Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings*, Merleau-Ponty affirms the philosophical significance of phenomenological inquiry.

But phenomenology is also a philosophy which puts essences back into existence, and does not expect to arrive at an understanding of man and the world from any starting point other than that of their 'facticity'. It is a

transcendental philosophy which places in abeyance the assertions arising out of the natural attitude, the better to understand them; but it is also a philosophy for which the world is always 'already there' before reflection begins - as an inalienable presence; and all its efforts are concentrated upon re-achieving a direct and primitive contact with the world... (Baldwin, 2003, p.63)

As Merleau-Ponty points out to us, the world is revealed to us as ready-made and already "there". It is not possible to experience something while reflecting on the experience, even if this experience is a reflective acting. For example, our experience of anger dissipates as soon as we try to analyse it while experiencing the anger. And we might speak of "specific intentionality" when the intentionality is specific to the act, referring to the directedness of thinking and acting here and now. And we might speak of "general intentionality" when we are being directed to the world—for example, as man, woman, child, mother, father, teacher, or author, and so forth, and for this thesis, as counsellor.

There are threads that weave right through my thesis and, in fact, I can begin the spinning, much as the silk worm begins refining threads of silk to surround her life amidst the leaves of the mulberry tree. The lush green leaves welcomed the butterfly that approached it tentatively and pro-creatively. Her off-spring feeds and swells till she glows in the dark, spins her cocoon with infinitely fine silk thread into a sacred sanctuary in which to dwell, realign her existential self, and form and re-form. If I consciously light upon each thread, unravel it, refine it, understand it better than ever before, my intentionality unfolds and discloses itself to me, and I write for others.

I spin the loose ends that free themselves from the bonds of the fore-structures of my understandings into insights and understandings that a consciously lived experience discloses to me. As I write I become aware of elements of myself that are transforming myself, my body, my mind, my thinking, my being and my relating to other and the world. As I write I learn to unfold my consciousness of this transforming self, as this consciousness discloses itself to me in the circumstances of the lived experience of being with others whom grief and loss entrap in cocoons of despair and disable them from re-entering the world outside. As I write I learn ways of understanding such paralysis of body and mind and spirit—ways of being and becoming present with others, being in empathy, in compassion, ways of

awakening the human spirit of self and others, by reaching into wellsprings of courage and hope.

Extra literary devices

There are other devices I use to assist the reader to understand my authorship. Describing such devices might have no appeal to my reader but it seems right to explain my reasoning for the formats that I use in this thesis. Different fonts announce to my reader the distinction of direct, indented quotes from story texts and poems. I also use a different font from Normal body text font for my summary of theory in Chapter 4 that represents a rather different voice, almost with 'tongue in cheek', from other critical discussions of theoretical perspectives generally. Square brackets within quotes indicate where I have inserted words that clarify meaning that are not used by the quote's author. Ellipses take the place of words irrelevant to the meaning that my own text requires. My references are directly related to those I cite in the body of my thesis.

In writing Chapter 6, "Sideshadowing and the Fantastic," I come to appreciate that, over years of researching my topic, I delight in reading a variety of literature and philosophy in which I encounter aspects of my self and others that help create my imaginaries for setting my reason, thought, reflection and interpretation within the landscape of my thesis. My extensive readings represent a resource for my life's work and for coming to know and understand my being-self in the deepest ways I can. Therefore, I have chosen to add a bibliography after my references, as much for myself as for my reader, for the story it might tell about me as the writer of this thesis.

The clients who call me to work with them have lost someone in their lives due to death or separation. The stories of my clients are rich and their experience in counselling is profound. It is through the written word that these stories and experiences can be described and understood. I wish to claim that I perform right ethical practices in writing stories of grief and loss from my professional records. I have deliberately disguised settings and given characters in the stories pseudonyms to protect the privacy and identity of those who have trusted me to work with them.

Some images I have transposed amongst the writing might add for the reader some additional layers of conscious understanding and insight. Mostly the sources of images that lie by the text are explained in the text. The images come from my own photo albums or from my account at www.pinterest.com, unless otherwise indicated.

Many books appear to us in different editions and translations taken on by different publishers over time. For example, Sheed and Ward Ltd published the first English translation of Gadamer's *Truth and Method* in 1975, The second revised edition appeared in 1989 published by the Crossroad Publishing Company. It is this latter edition I cite. In the twenty-first century we have extensive access to libraries world-wide, copyrighted e-books and Kindle books. For today's researchers, for example, Kindle books allow much cheaper access to some very expensive first edition books. I seek my reader's empathy with this new world approach to electronic acquisition of referential sources.

Chapter 2. Are we what we think we are?

We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we make the world. —Buddha

Phenomenology, the philosophical study of lived experience, aims to clarify the assumptions we make about the world we live in so that we may see ourselves, the world and our relationship with it more clearly. In psychological or therapeutic counselling, when we work phenomenologically with clients, we discover with them the ways we can learn to separate what is true to life in some assumptions to which we attribute belief from what we might come to understand as not actually so, as illusory beliefs. Clients come to therapy because they are unable to come up with viable alternative points of view about what they believe is happening to them; the counsellor perceives new and possible perspectives with which to engage them and help them to consciously choose their courses for their action and ways of thinking. The clients' narratives lead the way to conscious engagement with their own true effort to know and understand themselves as purposeful human agents of life.

Many theories and beliefs about psychological therapy have traversed the last century and travelled into this century. Psychotherapists have been talked into intensive, subjective self-analysis and then taught to be objective in their self-judgements, or to delve back into their memories, re-experience them and be highly subjective. Psychotherapists were to cure their clients' woes with the kinds of experiences they themselves suffered, teaching them, with psychotherapeutic theories and personal biases, how to solve their problems, learn new ways of behaving, or follow various cognitive-behaviour models that would be sure to help them out of their despair or adversity. I too have suffered seduction by such techniques and theories that seemed to make sense within the limits and

constraints of my experience of living through the myths and innocence of youth, the trials and errors of growing into adulthood, the responsibilities of parenthood, work life and becoming qualified and recognised as a professional and good counsellor.

When I became aware that I was 'doing counselling' through inquiry, dialogue and interpreting and I was aiming for self-understanding for my clients and for myself, I surveyed my years of experience as a counsellor to examine how the transforming of my counselling self was happening. From the first years, I was passionately intent—I still am—on becoming the best counsellor I can be for my clients. I was to learn that questioning is done in the spirit of curiosity not judgement, we can become aware of our own biases and prejudices, and, if we focus on our own worldview, we make it both more visible and more transparent to ourselves and to others. My relationships with my clients today represent to me inter-subjective exchanges of narrative, dialogue and shared understandings.

Professional counsellors are obliged to record our observations of the sessions we hold with clients. We must be able to account to our clients, to those who referred them to us, and to the professional bodies that watch over our practice and ethics. I looked backwards through my records over the last fifteen years and read them with consuming interest. I became intrigued by the changes in my style of writing and recording. The most recent were narrative in style, revealing details of conversations that were reflective and dialogical. There was a flow in the writing that conveyed a kind of intimacy in the understandings my clients and I shared with each other. Records before that were narratives too but with a different style that seemed to be constrained by my attempts to show that a particular theoretical model of therapy was at play and was working. My earliest records took me by surprise because there I was in charge, a figure before the client, directing the session unconsciously didactic in my tone. After all, I had been a teacher and now I was in the business of counselling! In my teaching youth and in my counselling youth, I craved theory to guide and justify my practice.

In this chapter, I reflect on different episodes from my 'youth', helped by my diaries, and I examine the traditions and conditions that both constrained my understandings about what it is to be the best counsellor I could be and the possibilities for deepening my understandings. This chapter foreshadows the chapters that follow in the unfolding narrative of my inquiry over years of

counselling, from youth to maturity. Later chapters bring me closer to developing moments of heeding consciousness that were to climax in my discovery that I can work phenomenologically and hermeneutically with clients. In the last episode I reveal an experience of personal pain and suffering that discloses to me a counsellor's human potential to engage in ever-unfinished explorations of self-understanding and no matter how everyday natural activity happens unconsciously, the practice of heeding consciousness becomes thick with possibilities for understanding.

As I write three subtitles emerge, "My theoretical self", "My anecdotal self" and "My existential self."

My theoretical self

Mary was in touch with me for counselling. Her partner had recommended it. Mary said that she had been feeling low in mood and distant from her partner over the last six months, and she thought that it was time for her to try and do something about it.

In the first session Mary talked about her grandmother who had died a little over six months ago. Mary was very close to her grandmother and she said that since that time that she has been feeling unmotivated, and she says that she feels sad most of the time. Mary cried a lot and said that she is still unable to talk or think too much about her grandmother as it makes her too upset and therefore she avoids doing so.

That first session Mary and I gained rapport, and I explained the process and limitations of counselling, and I got an overview of Mary's situation. I also pointed out that sometimes at the beginning of counselling clients can actually feel a bit worse before feeling better, due to bringing up issues that they may have been avoiding. Mary accepted this information and said that she was ready to deal with the things she had been pushing aside.

It seemed that Mary was suffering from low mood, feeling unmotivated, unresolved grief, some relationship problems, and career issues. Mary and I felt that the unresolved grief played a key role in all of the other issues and that that would be the focus of our work.

Mary is an 18 year old female who completed Year 12 last year. She is currently studying Office Administration at the Polytechnic but lately she has been missing classes and says that she has no interest in the course and would prefer to be studying photography. Mary also works part-time at a local bakery. She has held this job for

over a year, and again, lately, she has been calling in sick a lot recently and not attending work.

After her mother gave her up at birth as she was very young, Mary's paternal uncle raised her with very close involvement from her paternal grandmother. Mary had very little contact with her mother until age 14. However she did have regular contact with her father and she remains close to him. Mary has two younger half-brothers on her father's side, and one half-sister on her mother's side. Since contact with her mother began, Mary has become very close to her half-sister, and she says that her relationship with her mother is improving but that they do not talk about anything personal together.

Mary is currently in a relationship with a 20 year old male named John. Mary met John through a cousin at a party and they have been seeing each other for almost a year. Mary describes John as very supportive and she states he was great after her grandmother passed away, although she feels she has been pushing John away lately.

In the next session I encouraged Mary to speak of the loss of her grandmother. I focussed on how Mary felt she had dealt with the loss so far - had she cried, yelled, talked with someone about her feelings, or spent time alone. Mary admitted to blocking out any feelings at the time of her grandmother's death and avoiding thinking about it since. She said that she felt she should be strong for her two younger brothers and her father. Mary said that she hardly spoke to anyone about her feelings and she had not cried very much at all, at the time or since.

I chose, in consultation with Mary, to generally base the counselling sessions on the Seasons for Growth program for working with young people experiencing grief and loss. This program, based on the work of J. William Worden uses a four stage model, corresponding to the seasons of the year - Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer - to help young people work through their unresolved grief issues.

I assisted Mary to develop some definite goals of counselling. This turned out to be an important process as it enabled Mary and I to come together as a team to brainstorm ideas of goals for Mary. Mary came up with a number of goals which included embracing thoughts of her grandmother; allowing herself to grieve and especially cry if she wanted to do that; being able to remember her grandmother and speak about her without becoming too upset to do so; and moving forward positively with her life.

In the first stage, Autumn Mary and I focused on accepting the reality of the loss and we worked on acknowledging the reality of change and the loss that had taken place in her life.

Mary and I explored the concept of change, both positive and negative, discussing other losses or changes that had occurred in her life. Mary highlighted getting to know her mother, finishing high school, beginning a new relationship, and the loss of a pet dog that she had had for a number of years. Mary was able to discuss these events in detail and she was able to come to accept that change is a natural part of life, and that while change can often mean the end of something it can also bring about new experiences.

In the second stage, Winter relates to working through the pain and grief associated with change and loss. I worked with Mary around possible reactions to change and loss and explored how she experienced these.

Mary and I discussed the various ways different people grieve. I asked Mary for suggestions and we created a list. This list included words like denial, anger, guilt, sorrow, and confusion. Mary became aware of a wide variety of grieving methods and this helped to normalise her own reactions. Mary was able to recognise and name her own feelings of loss.

Mary related the details of her grandmother's death and explored the changes that the death has caused in her life and in particular the way she has been relating to others. As a visual exercise, I asked Mary to bring in some photos of her grandmother to assist this process and enable her to reflect on some memories of her grandmother.

Mary said that for the first time she actually felt good talking about her grandmother. I asked Mary to either choose a song that reminded her of her grandmother and bring it in to the next session, or to write a brief story relating one of her favourite memories of her grandmother and bring that along.

Mary loved this exercise, she actually wrote a song and a poem to her grandmother. Both pieces were very descriptive and allowed Mary to express her emotions. Mary is a very creative young woman and it was great to utilise these strengths.

For Spring I worked with Mary to adjust to an environment in which the significant person is no longer present. We worked to develop skills so that Mary could process her grief.

For Mary this stage was the hardest, as she expressed feelings of not wanting to admit that her grandmother was really gone. Mary also felt guilty and ungrateful imagining the world going on without her grandmother in it. She felt that if she was happy and enjoying life that she was not being respectful to her grandmother. I encouraged Mary to think about what her grandmother might want for her and how watching Mary being unhappy might make her feel.

I also encouraged Mary to explore her own goals in life and the positive aspects of her life, separate to her grandmother, and in so doing created a place for Mary to explore her future and see that it could be a good thing.

Mary and I worked through grieving as a natural process and that emotions can be heartily expressed. Mary and I worked together to come up with a list of coping strategies that would assist her if she felt like her emotions were getting too much for her to handle, strategies like Mary allowing herself to cry sometimes, expressing her feelings in her artwork or poetry, going for a walk, having a relaxing bath, or talking to a supportive friend.

For Summer I worked with Mary on emotional relocation to enable her to move on with her life. This involved exploring the ways of letting go and moving forward.

For Mary this was also a difficult stage and it was important for me to continue to remind her that "letting go" did not mean "forgetting" and I stressed the importance of keeping memories of her grandmother alive and not letting these go, and being able to deal with the grief and move forward so that recollecting these memories would not be so painful.

I shared with Mary some ways I had dealt with the loss of a close friend in the past and, for me, this involved creating a list of all of my favourite memories of my friend and putting that list away somewhere safe so that these memories would never fade or be forgotten. Mary appreciated this gesture of self-disclosure and actually thought the list idea was a good one, as forgetting little details is something she is very afraid of.

I also used guided imagery with Mary. I asked Mary to sit quietly and relax and visualise a kite flying in the sky on a beautiful sunny day. I asked her to imagine that she was holding the end of the kite string and watching the kite flying about in the breeze. Mary imagined that she was happy watching the kite and the kite was dipping and diving in the sky. After a while the kite begins to pull hard on the string and it becomes difficult for Mary to hold it anymore. It is almost as if the kite wants to fly off into the bright blue sky.

I then asked Mary to visually let go of the kite string and watch the kite fly away into the distance. The kite is pictured as happily floating away into the distance. I then asked Mary to imagine that the kite was her grandmother and although it was now gone she still holds the beautiful memory of flying the kite, and by letting go of the string she has not only freed her grandmother, but allows herself to move on and leave the park to go and explore other things on the beautiful sunny day. Mary, being a very visual person, found this guided imagery a very useful tool. She said that she felt calm and more accepting of letting her grandmother go.

After our work together Mary says that she feels better about moving on with her life. She says she feels more in charge of her future and ready to make some important changes. She has also spent some time discussing her feelings with both John and her father, and she has even visited her grandmother's grave on one occasion. Mary says that although it does still make her sad that her grandmother is gone, she now feels better able to cope with these feelings and she feels more than ready to move on.

One of my very first client records seems to imitate the style of record keeping that was required to report to the referring agent. The style required me, 'the counsellor', to state objectively, clinically, what had been observed about and said by the client and to quote the advice the counsellor gave. The voice is passive. Once I was a teacher and, in the schools I taught, I was expected to behave as one who imparts knowledge, as commanded by syllabi, who examines according to a set of standards, according to a set of criteria. I was in a kind of privileged position. I was in charge of the knowledge and the assessment. My students were to follow me to their destinations. It was perhaps natural that I would take my teacher self into my counselling. My teacher intentions were always oriented towards something that was generally considered meaningful in the pedagogical process—towards the class, resources, or curriculum. They were purposeful, I believed. I was then perhaps quite unaware of how much I was being directed by the education employer. As a beginning counsellor, I can see now how I must have been influenced by the accepted counselling theories and practices of the time.

As a teacher, I had choices, of course, based on decisions I would have made about goals-setting, the content of my lessons, the forms in which I presented them, the instructional method I would use, the working methods used, the resources available to me, the organisation of my classrooms, the curriculum. My decisions would have depended upon what I would have made of my students' efforts to reach some kind of competence. Did I have a personal view of education and knowledge, rights and obligations towards individual students, classes of students and the school? If I did, that too would have influenced the choices I made to behave as a teacher.

When I turned to counselling, I brought my pedagogical traditions with me. I can trace them in my early records—organising my rooms for receiving my clients, choosing the right counselling technique out of many I had been tutored in and

applying it with correctness, assessing the effort my client was likely to make, and give direction for her future progress. Michael Uljens, in *School Didactics and Learning*, accepting as given that teaching is a “purposive activity”, says we might well “ask about the extent to which the teacher is aware of the content of his own awareness” (1997, p.60). If I transpose his asking along with the crossing of my pedagogical traditions into therapeutic counselling, I would ask, given that I was purposive in my intention, about the extent to which I was aware of the content of my own awareness. As I continue with Uljens’ thinking, I allow myself to replace some of his pedagogical terms with counselling therapy terms to help me illustrate what I am coming to understand in re-reading my early records.

Degree of awareness means that individuals are not always equally aware of their own understanding as well as of their motives or reasons for doing something. In other words this awareness varies. These two aspects, i.e. the type of purposiveness and degree of awareness of [therapeutically] relevant questions, are fundamental features of the [counsellor’s] intentionality. (Uljens, 1997, p.60)

To what extent was I aware of being didactic in my counselling, or instructive, educative, informative, or pedagogic? I think that I was hardly aware of the intentionality, notwithstanding the fullness of it, that I have come to understand through the phenomenology of my thesis inquiry. And although my clients seemed to me to be prospering, I wonder why my awareness of the content of my awareness was so limited.

The philosopher, Charles Taylor, in an article, “Gadamer on the Human Sciences” (2002), forewarns us that in this new century our “greatest challenge” for politics, social science and human science, is that of understanding the other (p.127). Gadamer, as Taylor presents him, has made a momentous contribution to the transformation of our thinking and being.

The very ideas of objectivity, which underpinned our social science, seemed hard to combine with that of fundamental conceptual differences between cultures, so that real cultural openness seemed to threaten the very norms of validity on which social science rested. What often does not occur to those working in these fields is the thought that their whole model of science is wrong and inappropriate. It is here where Gadamer has made a tremendous contribution to twentieth century thought, for he has proposed a new and different model, which is much more fruitful, and shows promise of carrying

us beyond the dilemma of ethnocentrism and relativism. (Taylor, 2002, p.127)

I see now that I was following ideas and attitudes of objectivity. In the past, Taylor explains, as we often have been led to understand it, scientific explanation required us to have precise and explicit answers linked to our presuppositions. To help me understand, I follow Taylor, “In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer shows how understanding a text or event, which comes to us out of our history, has to be construed, not on the model of the “scientific” grasp of an object, but rather on that of speech-partners who come to an understanding" (p.160) was premature.

The seventeenth century scientific revolution developed a language to describe nature that was purged of human meanings. This language persisted during my early years of counselling, and still does today. This was a revolution, because the earlier scientific languages, largely influenced by Plato and Aristotle, were saturated with purpose-and value-terms. This was a revolution that bifurcated humanity for the following three hundred years at least: a human being was an object to be studied by a human being who was the subject studying the object.

Gadamer does not believe that the kind of knowledge that yields complete intellectual control over the object is attainable, even in principle, in human affairs. It may make sense to dream of this in particle physics, even to set this as one's goal, but not when it comes to understanding human beings. (Taylor, 2002, p.128)

My anecdotal self

We tell stories of our lives to our 'speech-partners'. We reveal something of ourselves to others and may select which details of our story to communicate with each one differently. Telling our stories helps us make sense of our lives and the tales of our lives constitute who we were and who we are becoming. We can think through a life occurrence, about what it is that has inspired us, what it is that has troubled us, and what it is that has energised us. The process of needing to think something through is empowering. We may develop one theory for one person, one for another, or a number of theories for particular purposes. For example, the day I was anticipating I could find an exotic to add to my collection turned into a story I would often share with friends. As I remember and write it at this moment,

I have a particular purpose in telling it—to enfold it into my thesis. As I write I 'feel' my angle changing.

I love succulents. I am passionate about growing succulents in pots. My friend was helping a friend with a garage sale and told me about some cacti and succulents on offer. Initially I thought these were give-aways, and that there were a lot of plants and they were rich and lush. I expressed interest in receiving these plants. A bit of time passed and the story changed to a garage sale and the succulents would be available, and that there were two boxes. I enquired as to how much and was told twenty dollars. I said okay, thinking things had changed a bit, but still okay.

I went to collect the boxes and when I arrived there was only one box and, fair to say, the succulents were in pretty bad shape. They were dried out, withered looking, and some were dead. I paid the twenty dollars, loaded the box to my car and drove home, feeling a little amused about the difference between the original story and the eventual outcome. Anyway, I unloaded the box and placed it in our backyard. Our grandson came over later that same day and played with the succulents from the box, and displaced them quite considerably! And I was not too bothered as it came to me that I was going to re-pot a few of the plants and throw some of them out anyway and I was happy that Tristan was having some fun with them.



And then as I was picking them up, I had a transforming thought. These are succulents.

They will grow from cuttings. I changed my mode and collected up all the little bits strewn around the backyard. I found three beautiful planter pots and potted up all the succulent bits and pieces. And as I was watering them and thinking about where I would display the three pots, I laughed at myself and the irony of my being originally startled, then appalled, and ultimately turning towards joy, excitement and anticipation.

The theory occurs to me now, before I put my pen down, is that the best I can hope for in telling my stories is some insight into the fallibility and foibles of human beings, including me, and our essential limitations (Gadamer, 1989).

An 'anecdote', my dictionary informs me, is "a short account of some interesting or humorous incident." Jane Gallop, in *Anecdotal Theory*, proposes that as we are telling a story and thinking something through, we experience "an impetus for theorising" (2002, p.16). As I settle into theorising about my short account of the succulent event, I recognise humour in its tone and that draws my interest. So my

succulent event provides me with some interesting directions for proposing some theories about what anecdotes do for us.

I turn back to a line taken by Gallop who says, " 'Anecdote' and 'theory' carry diametrically opposed connotations: humorous vs. serious, short vs. grand, trivial vs. overarching, specific vs. general" (p.2). My anecdote might on the surface appear quirky, trivial and singular. On the other hand, the theory I attributed to it is quite grand, I identified a moment of heeding consciousness. I could interpret something bleak and ironically attribute optimistic understanding of it. Theorising with anecdotes, says Gallop, could "cut through these oppositions." We could produce theory with a better sense of irony that honours the uncanny detail of lived experience (p.2). In *Narrative Identities: Psychologists Engaged in Self-Construction* (2005), George Yancy and Susan Hadley suggest that as *homo narrans* and *homo significans* we can imagine possibilities for making sense of our past, present and future lives within our culture and history; we are not to believe though that narrations of our *eros*, our desire for meaning in our lives, make arbitrary or ad hoc "pastiche" of our identities.

The process of being "positioned by" and "positioning ourselves within" bespeaks the "facticity–possibility" dynamic that each of us are as makers of meaning. Our "facticity" constitutes both obstacles later to be challenged and overcome, and the inherited, pre-interpreted framework of intelligibility within which the self becomes meaningfully grounded and is situated. Within the *subjunctive* mode, we exist as always already beyond ourselves, as *possibility*. (Yancy & Hadley, 2005, p.10)

Writers imagine and multiply possibilities from the core of lived experience. They play creatively with possibilities and impossibilities. In her book chapter, "Philosophy as Sideshadowing: The Philosophical, the Literary, and the Fantastic," Evgenia Cherkasova (2004), proposes to call this activity "sideshadowing". She borrows the notion of sideshadowing from Gary Saul Morson's book, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (1995). Every event has multiple sideshadows, multiple possibilities and impossibilities, for circumstances to unfold. The term, sideshadowing, Cherkasova tells us, was conceived as a counterpart to foreshadowing—a well-known literary device that pulls a story forward into its future (p.201). But Cherkasova finds the term "foreshadowing" problematic. "There is really nothing to foreshadow," she says, "the future is always yet to

come... Life is full of meaningless coincidences and contingent details that lead absolutely nowhere.” (p.202) Most of us try to create, write or mould our own lives but we never succeed in putting the final touch to it.

‘Sideshadowing’ points to this sense of the elemental openness of events and champions the concrete random and inassimilable. It challenges both the inevitability of retrospective thinking and the linear movement of thought and expression. Described in a few words, sideshadowing represents the idea that every situation, imaginary or real, comprises not only what happens but also what might have happened. Both actualised and unactualised possibilities leave their mark on history. (P.202)

We seek meaning in the sideshadows of our lives. Our attempts to give meaning to our real or imagined lived experience become the stories and anecdotes with which we share something of ourselves with others. van Manen supports using anecdote or story as an excellent tool in phenomenological writing. He refers to anecdotes as “a special kind of story” (1990, p.115) that explains something significant and retells from M. Langeveld, (*How does the child experience the world of things?* 1984), a story about a little girl who offers her baby brother a tiny feather: "The four-year old comes to her mother, who is busy with the newborn baby, and has a 'treasure' in her hand. It is a tiny feather of a sparrow. This is for little brother, because he is still so small ... Now that is a true gift!" says Langeveld (p.218, quoted by van Manen, p.115). Langeveld, suggests van Manen, uses this anecdote to make a distinction between a present and a gift. Langeveld explains, "A present can make friendship, but love and friendship make gifts, even the smallest ones, possible. ... So the little girls' feather is small—so be it: Isn't the little brother small too!" (p.218). Langeveld suggests that a present might come from a shop, “but whoever gives a gift, gives himself or herself. He or she *is* the thing” (van Manen, p.115).

van Manen always insists on finding meanings for words through etymology. The term 'anecdote' comes from the Greek, *anekdota*, things unpublished. He uses Webster's Dictionary to find that an anecdote is “a usually short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident”, and the Oxford Dictionary to reveal anecdote as "secret, private, or hitherto unpublished narratives or details of history," and a narrative of an incident as "being in itself interesting or striking." For my purposes in this thesis, it is important to note that the Greek meaning of

anekdota, things unpublished, originates in things not given out, from *an*, not and *ekdotos*, given out, or unpublished (p.116).

Writers, including philosophers, such as Aristotle, Husserl, Sartre, Samuel Johnson, Merleau-Ponty and others use anecdotes in biographical and phenomenological writing as a methodological device in human science to make some notion that may elude us comprehensible.

Biographers of eighteenth century Samuel Johnson, himself a reputed, proliferate biographer of poets and writers have immersed him in anecdotes, just as Johnson himself was a collector of anecdotes— an anecdote, Johnson said, was “a biographical incident, a minute passage of private life.” Lawrence Lipking (2000) draws attention to Johnson’s satisfaction for anecdote: the “main business of life...consists of doing things that involve other people, allowing them to build a critical mass of anecdotes and sketches.”

The effort to think oneself into the frame of mind and the motives of someone else helps to define a moral being, according to Johnson, and many readers have testified that Johnson's example has helped them to live. The art of biography has grown from the spark that he kindled; that is not the least of his accomplishments. (Lipking, 2000, p.3)

In studying lived experience it makes sense that we involve ourselves in the art of biography and allow for the authority of people who amass anecdotes and sketches to tell us about their lives.

Clifton Fadiman, general editor of *The Little, Brown Book of Anecdotes* (2009, p.xxi), comments that biographers and historians value anecdotes for their power to reveal the true character of persons or of times which are hard to capture in any other manner. In his introduction to the collection, he says that “The definition of the anecdote shifts with the centuries.” He tells us that Isaac D’Israeli (1766-1848) referred to anecdotes as “minute notices of human nature and human learning” and Winston Churchill called anecdotes “the gleaming toys of history” (p.xx).

Anecdotes help us grasp a subject by depicting a way of thinking or a style or figure we find difficult to distinguish through direct description. Anecdotes help us to make the point that seems to constantly elude us. We can perhaps come to be satisfied with a short poignant narrative to demonstrate or exemplify our point. A

number of anecdotes might combine as fragments of a whole story to complete an extended narrative of a lived experience.

van Manen recalls a very short piece of surprising anecdotal evidence that shows something of Husserl's character. "As a boy Edmund wanted to sharpen his knife. And he persisted in making the knife sharper and sharper until finally he had nothing left" (van Manen, p.117 from de Boer, 1980, p.10). According to other anecdotal evidence, Husserl's perfectionist qualities obliged him to revise, rewrite, and edit endlessly.

Anecdotes can of course draw negative reactions such as the notion of 'that's only anecdotal evidence' where the suggestion that such 'anecdotal evidence' is not allowed in a proper argument. However an anecdote is rather like a poetic narrative that describes a universal truth, van Manen quotes Aristotle on the poetic epic of his time and applies it to anecdotal narrative in our time.

the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e., what is possible as being probably or necessary ... poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. (Poetics, 1451, in van Manen, p.119)

Fadiman suggests that "if one were asked to name the kind of book that within one set of covers most adequately reflects the sheer multifariousness of the human personality, it might be a book of anecdotes". We might bring to mind such book titles as, Dr Johnson's *Book of Anecdotes*, *Dissertation on Anecdotes* (Isaac D'Israeli), *Abe Lincoln Laughing: Humorous Anecdotes from Original Sources by and about Abraham Lincoln* (P.M.Zall), *The Playboy Interview: Funny People* (Don Rickles et al). There are hundreds more collections, anecdotal histories of human nature and human learning, of things not usually given out.

Fadiman concludes his introduction with summative insight.

Assiduous reading of anecdotes can...light up odd corners of the past that we should all recognise. But it can, far more valuably, shake us out of our quotidian rut, administer a slight and salutary shock of surprise or delight. At its finest, an anecdote signalises an intervention of the unexpected. It mounts a small-scale assault on the banality of normal intercourse. (2009, p.xxii)

In van Manen's appraisal of anecdote as significant for human science discourse, as well as for writing in phenomenological inquiry, he finds and lists five

characteristics of anecdotes that make them worthy heuristics for inquiry and writing.

- (1) Anecdotes form a concrete counterweight to abstract theoretical thought. Phenomenology tries to penetrate the layers of meaning of the concrete by tilling and turning the soil of daily existence. Anecdote is one of the implements for laying bare the covered-over meanings.
- (2) Anecdotes express a certain disdain for the alienated and alienating discourse of scholars who have difficulty showing how life and theoretical propositions are connected. Anecdotes can indeed be described as pragmatic, encouraging us to search out the relation between living and thinking, between situation and reflection.
- (3) Anecdotes may provide an account of certain teachings or doctrines which were never written down. For example, Plato's *Dialogues* is a collection of anecdotes about Socrates, the philosopher and offers round-about or indirect reflections about fundamental human experiences such as friendship and love.
- (4) Anecdotes may be encountered as concrete demonstrations of wisdom, sensitive insight, and proverbial truth - where for example anecdotes can be offered as "likely stories" rather than factual truths.
- (5) Anecdotes of a certain event or incident may acquire the significance of exemplary character. An anecdote may be offered as an example or as a recommendation for acting or seeing things in a certain way so that the recipient of the anecdote may sense or perceive a certain truth that is otherwise difficult to put into clear language. (van Manen, 1990, pp.119-120)

There is of course a paradox with anecdotal narrative in that it tells something particular while really addressing the general or the universal. And actually, vice versa.

As "minute notices of human nature and of human learning" anecdotes can teach us. As examples of practical theorising, one can use them as experimental case material for reflecting upon the counselling experience. The story allows the human science text to acquire a narrative quality. van Manen advocates combining practical theorising and narrative, blending "the power of literary or philosophic or systematic discourse with the power of literary or poetic language" (p.121) to form an essential feature of anecdotal and phenomenological discourse that both draws us in and prompts us to reflect. He convincingly extinguishes the comment 'that's

only anecdotal' that infers lack of proper evidence. He advances his belief, following very many others as we have shown above, that anecdotal narrative in phenomenological research and writing has power

- (1) to compel: a story recruits our willing attention;
- (2) to lead us to reflect: a story tends to invite us to a reflective search for significance;
- (3) to involve us personally: one tends to search actively for the story teller's meaning via one's own;
- (4) to transform: we may be touched, shaken, moved by a story; it teaches us;
- (5) to measure one's interpretive sense: one's response to a story is a measure of one's deepened ability to make interpretative sense. (van Manen, 1990, p.121)

Joel Fineman, says Gallop, describes anecdote as a "narration of a singular event." An anecdote can point us directly towards what is rooted in the real by insisting on the "occasional," on the moment of the event, as the site of productive thinking. An anecdote as "an occasional piece" can assist us to interpret what at first seems is "too fixed, too abstract, too eternal and ahistorical" by drawing attention to the place where syntax knots with the real (2002, p.2).

My thesis could be seen as a collection of occasional theory, a theorising produced at a particular moment for a particular context. Theory comes from the very place where thought happens. I admit the human impetus for story and theorising. As my thesis unfolds, and as I reconstitute story and anecdote after story and anecdote, I continue to encounter my theorising self in my narration of singular, real events. I relate my encounters with the theories of others in the chapters that follow this. My effort is to understand my counselling self.

My existential self

Yalom would ask the counsellors who came to his training sessions, "Who among you consider yourselves to be existentially oriented?" Over fifty percent would respond affirmatively. He would then ask, "What is the existential approach?" They would find it difficult to answer (1980, p.5). If I were among his audience, I would have responded in just those ways. Let me explore now why I would have been among those who answered yes to his first question. Two years

ago a series of events in my life brought me into an intimate relationship with myself. Now I return to those events to allow themes to emerge with which I can re-engage in later chapters of my thesis. I wrote these pages in my research diary notes, 14 April 2011, to try to capture the momentous force that I felt at the time that my lived experience of the events was changing my approach to counselling. My idea was simply to put pen to paper and write whatever came to me.

For Gadamer, language provides the speaker with not just a means of communication but a standpoint from which to view the world, a worldview. From the standpoint language gives us, one acquires a 'horizon', a perspective on the world. (Gadamer, 1989, p.302). The language of counsellors, suggests Yalom, when they attempt to describe their worldviews has not been “celebrated for its crispness or clarity.” Many critics would accuse therapists of being imprecise, unfocussed and muddled. Yalom says, “Of all the therapy vocabularies, none rivals the existential in vagueness and confusion” (1980, p.5). The reader might judge my story as such existential confusion. But I would like to believe it became a standpoint for acquiring new perspectives on my approach to counselling.

As van Manen refers to the tension between understanding and experience, reflection and action, he favours the act of literacy, reading and writing, to develop consciousness and “action sensitive understanding.” It is this “certain kind of writing” that is of interest in my inquiry, “a minded act of writing that orients itself towards notions that might help us understand significant features of our lived experience” (1990, p.124).

When I set myself the task of writing in a kind of stream of consciousness of one of the most traumatic experiences of my life, I wrote a broken story. Some weeks later I read over what I wrote and thought that only weakly did this initial writing convey the depths of despair and the joy that followed. As I want always to honour this kind of raw writing task, one that I could encourage my clients to do, as a way of self-expressing, I set the raw writing out below. Then I set out in a text box alongside it, as if it were in Gadamer’s sense, over and against it, the words that stood out as disturbing or piteous or elating. Then upon re-reading, and re-writing, from my attempt to signify fragments of disturbance, of trauma, isolation, loneliness, fear and pain that grip us when circumstances outside one’s control challenge our existing selves, there emerged a poem from the text box words. Now beside the raw story lies the poem.

The day started reasonably well. The alarm went off at 5.45am and my husband Nick and I got up and got going. I was fasting so there was nothing for me to do with regard to eating or drinking. I had a great shower and washed my hair anticipating it would be a few days before I would take a comfortable shower again. We drove into town, a very short drive, parked in Wapping and arrived at Hobart Private Hospital at 7am to Admissions on the 5th floor.

*5.45am
I showered
Nothing to do
I waited.*

We had to wait a little while in a waiting room along with several other people. All of us, it seemed, were nervously waiting for our turn, waiting to pay our admission fee, and waiting to be formally admitted and then taken off somewhere for whatever procedure was booked. The TV was on and there was a meant-to-be-inspiring story about a father who was challenging a school because of alleged discrimination over the length of his son's hair. I remember the story being particularly not riveting.

*Waiting room
Waiting
to be taken
somewhere
incapable
of distraction.*

When it was my turn, Nick and I went with the Admissions Officer down to the 4th floor Surgery ward and into a two-bed ward. I did not realise it at the time but I had left my bag full of x-rays on the coffee table in the waiting room on 5th floor. Fortunately these x-rays were later successfully retrieved by Nick and passed on to the nurse.

*So anxious
I forgot my xrays
in transit
to Floor 4.*

The Admissions Officer left us in the two-bed ward and immediately it was apparent that the older woman in the next bed, closed off to us by only a curtain, was in great distress, calling out in a weak, pained voice to mostly staff and requiring considerable assistance from nurses to help her and clean her up.

*Waited till
I came to a ward
with two beds.*

I was already anxious about my surgery and being in that two-bed ward with that poor lady, my anxiety escalated. Nick went to see a nurse to request I be moved to another room or even that we might wait in the corridor. Hours passed and nothing much happened other than my anxiety increasing further. I eventually was able to put on a hospital gown, and in

the act of taking off my street clothes I gave up my independence and started the process of becoming institutionalised.

Somewhere during this time the nurse asked all sorts of health questions and wrote information down and the anaesthetist visited and he was encouraging. Nick left at 11.30am by which time I was wheeled to the operating theatre waiting area. I waited for what seemed like a very long time and then it really was my turn.

*Waited
really waited
for hours
whilst I lost
dignity and
independence
in a hospital gown
in an institution.*

*11.30am
and I waited
still
for my turn.*

A nurse and my anaesthetist wheeled me into theatre and there was Dr Paul, the surgeon. He said, hi, and told me that he would be taking lots of juicy stuff out of my hip to put in my fibula with plating and screwing. I think I was beyond reacting or speaking by then. The anaesthetist was encouraging—well, sort of—and said 'You'll be okay'. Suddenly there were the operating theatre lights and it was certainly not as romantic as operating theatres can seem on the TV. I remember the anaesthetist referring to Gray's Anatomy and I do not remember anything after that.

*There was juicy stuff
to come out, he said,
And there was plating
and
screwing to do.
I was
beyond reacting
beyond speaking.*

I was back on the ward by mid-afternoon and Nick was there and I really had a hard time waking up from the anaesthetic. And then I was aware of the pain, nausea, vomiting and more vomiting and more pain and head pain. It was the most awful head pain, in the league of a migraine but not a migraine. I got the nurses to check that I could take a migraine drug and I could and I did and it made absolutely no difference to the head pain.

*Halogen lights
not romantic candles.*

*Over now
vomiting,
vomiting pain
...pain...pain...
painkillers....*

Over the next two days I was in and out of pain, nausea, woozy, drifting, feeling like I could not wake up. I ate one or two sandwiches over that time ... not hungry ... cups of tea and water ... drugs, painkillers every 4 hours...morphine pain

*Have a cup of tea, dear.
Come on now,
do try*

button kicked in relief ... not for long enough. Each time I woke very bad head pain seared my skull. I started to eat a bit more, and was forced into physio using crutches or a walking frame. There was no sleep for me.

I vagued out listening to other people's talk and it was the tone that I noticed. I heard a wife, a patient, being quite scoffing and critical to her husband who was visiting. I heard the husband being good humoured and letting it go. And the nights were challenging for the distressed woman, and the poor confused man with dementia calling out to Bev and Dianne. And I heard the nursing staff trying to calm them all. And I just lay amongst the voices with my pain.

*your crutches.
No narcotic relief.*

*I lay
among the voices
in the place
of my diasporas-
scoffing
artificial
critical
good humoured
voices,
demented calls
for mother and sister,
confused
and calm
all at once.*

In that hospital it was absolutely dreadful.

And then there was Dr Paul on ward visits. On Friday morning he was dressed in blue scrubs. On Saturday morning he was dressed in stylish casuals in the company of his two beautiful little girls. I found out then that I was to be "non-weight-bearing", imprisoned in plaster, and dependent on a walking frame and crutches for two weeks! Worse, I had to "be in a black cam boot" for four weeks after that along with a frame and crutches. I was completely flabbergasted. Six weeks held captive. I would be chained, restrained as if in irons. This changed everything with regards to what I thought I would be doing, how I would be getting around, and my plans for going back to work.

*Scrubbed was the
doctor
on Friday,
smart on
Saturday.*

*Black boot
to imprison me
to bear me up and
weigh me down.*

I battled on in hospital for five days and it was very bad. Even being discharged was so taxing that my nurse told me I needed a certain drug and she would endeavour to get a prescription to take with me. And I waited obediently, and waited

*I was captive
obedient
I waited*

some further hours before I could leave.

Leaving the ward was surreal. I was wheeled downstairs to wait for Nick to bring the car to the hospital exit, and then helped into the car with the thought of going home. Driving up Argyle Street everything was sparkling though it was pouring with rain and very grey. I saw things so sharply. I felt like I was seeing things for the first time. By the time I had gotten from the car to our dining room I was exhausted. Nick went out to supermarket when our dear friends Tom and Marilyn visited. I gave them the whole hospital story and that was hugely and strangely fulfilling, one debrief.

I cannot believe how much I hated it in that hospital. I was isolated, lonely, uncomfortable and uneasy, and I think it all started on admission waiting in the two-bed ward with that poor sick noisy lady in the next bed.

The best job in the hospital is delivering the meals and morning and afternoon teas. In the early days of being in the hospital I was only able to say a quiet thanks as my tray was put on the table. Over time I became more animated and exchanged heartier thank you, until the women were actually smiling at me and showing an interest.

One day one of them asked me how I had done it, how I had broken my leg. The woman who asked me was three times my width and possibly in her mid-60s—I did not think exercise was an everyday feature for her. I said I was in a run and had slipped, and the moral of the story is exercise is bad for you. She laughed like anything and from then on continued talking with me each

*and battled
a hard fight.*

*Wheelchair and car
taxis home.*

*Surreal
rain sparkling
sky and city grey.*

Home.

*It was awful
hateful
what my leg did to
me
what scalpels did
and stitches
and plaster
and nurses
and morphine
and a black boot.*

Was my best friend
to be a bucket
like the tea-lady
said
to carry my stuff
with me
from place to
place?

The best?
The worst?
The best-I exist.
The worst-I exist.

time she called by with food or drink. She would tell me that it was not fair for me, because even people with hip replacements and knee reconstructions, could all walk around and, you, with your broken leg, cannot put your foot to the ground. She told me that my best friend would be a bucket! I asked her about that and she explained that you could put things in the bucket and carry them around while using the walking frame or the crutches!

No, really.
The best?
It was hearts
connecting
again.

The worst things —the distressed lady on admission, the dementia man in early hours of the morning, pain, particularly head pain, and nausea.

The best things—most of the nursing staff, Dr Paul, the anaesthetist, the tea ladies, Nick visiting, Wilmar, Marian and Mariola, Hans, and John, Keith and Gwenyth—all very nice visits, all the texts and great wishes from family and friends, the flowers. All the flowers—wow ! Coming home and the ‘Sandra and Simon blanket’—wow ! And even more flowers.

My muse was a situation where chance confronted me. I slipped on a banana peel at mile seven of the New York marathon and found myself some four months later in agony, in fear for my life and lifestyle, in black despair, forsaken. My poetic form reveals for me the possibility that despair points to something beyond worldly experience. In *Way to Wisdom*, Jaspers suggests to us that our attitude towards the despair we confront is crucial whether the situation comes with anxiety, failure, or death, whether it remains hidden from us, whether we perceive it as unobscured as the limits of existence, whether we seek fantastic solutions or consolations, or face it honestly, the way in which we approach our despair determines what we will become. (1966, p.23)

Says Jaspers,

In ultimate situations [wo/man] either perceives nothingness or senses true being in spite of and above all ephemeral existence. Even despair, by the very fact that it is possible in the world, points beyond the world. (1966, p.23)

Jaspers proposes that the sciences have theorised about wo/man as though s/he were an object in the world like other things, an object to be understood by detached and objective investigation. Existentialism is a reaction to this notion of

science and calls our attention to our concrete human situation (1971, p.vii).

Above, I poeticise what some might see as an ordinary everyday experience. With existential consciousness, I am entirely *unable* to see myself as an object that might be scientifically described. By moving about in the knowledge of my historical being, I move out of confinement and show, as John Hennig, commenting on Jaspers' attitude towards history points out, that "behind yonder mountains there are also people, different people" (in Schlipp, 1957, p.573).

One of the media Barthes most loves is photography. His autobiography, , begins with a number of photographs in which there is a particular detail that draws him into the image as if to live it. Amongst them is one that helps me illustrate how one might focus on a particular detail in a radical way so that the contingency captured, in Barthes' photograph, entraps an ineradicable memory. For one photograph of an approaching streetcar along lines of traffic in a French suburb, Barthes attributes the caption, "the white snout of the streetcar of my childhood" and evokes autobiographical image, memory and sentiment (1977, p.19). If I consider my narrative text as a photograph, as vivid enough to permit its telling, I might find one detail that evokes my sentiment and poetic representation of it. In the narratives I represent above, one raw in its writing, the other poetic, it is the awful agony of waiting that denied my identity that draws me in, like the white snout of Barthes' streetcar, and warrants drawing my reader's engagement with it.

"The psychodynamics of an individual include the various unconscious and conscious forces, motives, and fears that operate within him or her" (Yalom, 1980, p.6). The experience of annotating my diary notes is a meditation on the conscious and the unconscious self that experienced loss of identity, loss of power, loss of flesh and bone. The themes of meditating—on waiting for time, on a world observed, on visceral pain, on appearance, on relief, on gratitude—are acts of bringing what is both conscious and unconscious into direct expression of what it is to be, existing in the world. The writing, reading, re-reading and meditating is *poesis*, a bringing into being of the existentiality of my self.

To some extent, I hope, with this chapter, I have demonstrated aspects of myself that are in and out of me. At the same time, the experience of examining the

possibilities of disclosing human vulnerability to readers might give one illustration of why Gadamer rejects the ideal of “objectivity” of “author-intention”.

To try to escape from one's own concepts in interpretation is not only impossible but manifestly absurd. To interpret means precisely to bring one's own preconceptions into play so that the text's meaning can really be made to speak for us. (Dove, *The Reader and the Detective Story*, 1997, p.49)

George Dove thus suggests that the reader's participation, once excluded on grounds of "subjectivity," becomes a necessary partner in interpretation, along with text and author.

Phenomenological theories of response are primarily interested in the relationship between the consciousness of the reader and the perceived text, and how an object "intends" to be perceived. They also undertake to describe ways readers apprehend texts by losing themselves to the writer's own way of perceiving reality. (Dove, 1997, p.49)

And so I ask my readers to suspend judgement. My stories and anecdotes are of everyday human trauma that occurs when human beings become more acutely aware of existing in the world through loss of an unborn child, a daughter, a son, a father, a lover, a husband, a body part, or an identity. I invite my readers to lose your selves to the multiple ways we might perceive our realities. For who can judge that human suffering in a war torn region might be superlatively awful compared to daily existence in a small, fairly quiet island city with its own historically brutal, penal birth? Who can say that one human being suffers our ultimate situations—death, chance, guilt and uncertainty of living in the world—more or less than another?

Chapter 3. Patterning and unpatterning traditions

They were fused from that moment and either had to go through what was left of their lives together melded in that fashion, like two drowning swimmers holding each other down in molten grief, or they had to look away and try not to share a moment of intimacy ever again. Without its ever being discussed, they chose the latter route.
—Howard Jacobson

Allen, in his book *Roland Barthes*, comments on Barthes' resistances to his own ideas. Barthes finds patterns in theoretical practices and submits them to criticism (2003, p.95). This is what I find myself doing as I proceed with this new chapter—I become aware of my theoretical practice and submit it to internal criticism. I do not write however with a critical language. It is not my intention to criticise the work I have admired and practised. Rather, I heed consciousness of my developing capacity for finding a deeper appreciation of ways to be a counsellor.

Allen also helps us to think about the patterns of *doxa* and *paradoxa* in Barthes' work. This too is a pattern of oppositional thinking that I submit myself to. *Doxa* is the stereotype, *paradoxa* is the novation, says Barthes himself (in Allen, p.96). For example, transmitting ideas through theoretical writing can become inauthentic; writing for the author's own sake, creating its own conditions, cannot be.

In 1989, H.B.Gellatt, in a journal article "Positive Uncertainty: A New Decision-Making Framework for Counselling," proposed a new philosophy of counselling saying that the time had come to embrace the phenomenon of 'positive uncertainty'. Once we knew the past, we could predict the future, and the present changed only slowly. In reality the past is not what we thought it to be, we can no longer be confident that the future is predictable, and we experience a rapidly

changing present. It may seem absurd and contradictory to conjoin the terms 'positive' and 'uncertainty'. When we investigate this conjunction, and practise an attitude towards our living in the world that embraces what positive uncertainty proposes, we can enhance our well-being (1992, p.1 of 5).

Gellatt suggests we need positive uncertainty because in today's world change is more rapid, more complex, more turbulent and more unpredictable than ever before. Analogies to describe change as 'sailing in uncharted waters', or 'tumbling in white water rapids' surpass the tradition of 'the more things change the more they stay the same', are hopelessly out-dated ideas (1992, p.1 of 5).

Once, says Gellatt, counsellors helped clients to use a rational process for making decisions, choosing what to be when they "grow up", and preparing for adjusting to change. Decision-making, growing up, and change, however, are not what they used to be. Decision-making is more than a rational process. What to be when grown up is less important than growing. And change itself has changed so much that our old beliefs, attitudes and even knowledge are now out of date. To come up-to-date with what is now, we need to change our philosophy, our theory underlying our thoughts, and our point of view. In the helping profession of counselling, Gellatt advocates counsellors as change agents who work with an attitude of positive uncertainty (1992, p.1 of 5).

In the way that most theories of counselling enter the conversations between counsellors in meeting rooms, conferences or newsletters, it was not until the late nineties that I discovered what my colleagues had found. Some were all for trying out 'Gellatt's Positive Uncertainty', others were sceptical of it as just another counselling technique that was becoming popularised, and others wanted to leave it alone, preferring to keep to their own ways. My way was to investigate this new theory. The stories below were in my records at the time. They recorded happenings that constituted what I had found out about Irene and Dan. Here they offer ways to examine the oppositions of *doxa* and *paradoxa*, in this case, certainty and uncertainty, when, faithful to my colleagues, I experimented with the structures of Gellatt's theory.

— Irene said she'd been shouted at and pushed by Monica and she was alarmed and hurt. She said she felt like she had been verbally assaulted. She felt like she had been physically assaulted. She emailed her manager to report the incident. On reading her report, her manager came to her office to see how she was. She said she wasn't good,

that she was crying, and that there was a red mark on her arm. Her manager sent her home early and encouraged her to file an incident report. She went to the doctor on her way home and the doctor cited a bruise was forming on her arm where she had been pushed.

At work the next day she filed an incident report - and considerable time passed during which she was off work sick with the flu, and during this time the respondent and a witness supplied their information. Then she received a report suggesting that she had not been shouted at, at all, and that she had not been pushed. She was grief-stricken. She said it was as if something had been taken from her —maybe her integrity.

— Dan's Mum rang to make an appointment for him - a young man of nineteen years old who had major back and neck surgery approximately six months prior to us meeting to work together.

I met Dan downstairs in our building, a very nice young man happy to come along and meet with me for counselling, and I showed him the way to my room.

He had been a regular guy, a Grade 10 leaver, and about a month before he was due to finish up for the school year he was diagnosed with a tumour on his spine. Fortunately the tumour was benign but it was found in such a difficult place that the surgery was in fact a threat to whether he would be able to walk again. If the surgery turned out less severe he would still suffer restrictions afterwards. He had about two weeks to get used to the idea of surgery and the severity of the situation and the accompanying risk. The surgery took place in Sydney. Dan had to finish school there and then, go for surgery, recover and rehabilitate. He did an astonishing job. He has been spectacularly drawn to be as good as he can be— he has followed the exercise routines that were given to him to the letter with astonishing results, he just has a slightly stooped neck and certain activities stretch him to the point that his neck, shoulders and arms ache. But he missed out on the natural rhythm of finishing Grade 10, the leavers dinner and other events, and summer holidays 2010 when getting a job was what all his mates did. He was not going to be able to learn carpentry, his long-term plan. He has a girlfriend and that phrase 'she's been the making of him' comes to mind. She has been unremittingly supportive like his parents, brother, sister, other family members and friends. It is just that Dan has noticed that he has lost something—his brother followed him into Grade 10 and is doing all that Dan would have done during the previous year were it not for Dan's surgery. Because his family live at home together, his brother's activities are right there in front of him.

In many ways Dan has grown-up so much during the months I have been working with him. Yet, he says he is fine and then he acknowledges that he is not fine. We talk

about his girlfriend, what they do together and how they are going along together. We talk about his mates, and the kinds of activities he enjoys doing with them—fishing, shooting, playing 8-ball. We talk about his relationship with his Mum and Dad and his family, about AFL, his team Essendon, cricket, sport in general, celebrities, politicians, music, movies, TV shows, cars, work, what he wants to do *with* his life, what he wants to do *in* his life, his continuing rehabilitation program, what makes him laugh, what makes him angry, family pets, toys he played with as a child, hobbies, woodwork, where he'd been on holidays and where he'd like to go—Australia, overseas, what jobs he's interested in that he can actually do given his post-operative situation.

What I see missing from my records is thoughtful questioning and reflection about what was, for instance, compelling Irene into grief and Dan into thinking positively about his future after pulling through his trauma. From the place of my lived experience today, if I were to contemplate and meditate upon what Gellatt was presenting to us, how might I have written my records otherwise? What questions might I have pursued? What kinds of conversations might I have nurtured?

To draw out Irene's story I must have asked what happened to upset her, at least. I must have listened. Somehow I learned enough about her to perceive that she had been robbed of something from the first moment of the assault she claims was made against her and that that might have been the source of her despair—she had experienced some kind of attack upon her integrity and therefore her identity. Had something precious really been taken from her? Had she actually lost something? Had she indeed given something up? Were there questions I might have pursued in the name of positive uncertainty? In what ways could I have possibly helped her to figure out why she was crying or why her response seemed like grief, to me anyway?

For Gellatt, positive uncertainty is a philosophy for living every day of our lives. Positive uncertainty is a point of view. It offers an approach to making decisions about the future when we are quite uncertain of what it will be. Positive uncertainty is a paradoxical, ambiguous process for managing our changing lives by using both the rational and the intuitive mind. Learning to assume an attitude of positive uncertainty permits us to change our mind for the sake of our well-being as we “grow up” (1992, 1 of 5). Might the positive uncertainty counselling that I knew about then, and could have offered Irene, come too late for her in her lifetime?

In the past, paradox —something that seemed contrary to common sense yet was perhaps true—was uncommon, and ambiguity—something capable of being understood in two or more possible ways—was unwelcome. Might such a new kind of counselling have been unwelcomed by Irene? For Gellatt, paradox is everywhere, in everything, common sense is being revised and ambiguity is now acceptable while absolutes are distrusted. The challenge for counselling is to develop an approach that is paradoxical and ambiguous and, at the same time, helpful. I can see some kind of paradox in Irene's situation but back then only the resources of instinct might have been stronger than technique so that Irene could feel valued.

Changing minds

George Land and Beth Jarman (1992), in *Breakpoint and Beyond*, introduce the notion of "breakpoint change", change that brings giant leaps and critical shifts in the rules that govern success. We have learned that such changes are natural though they cause huge gaps between what has always been and what can happen next. Clearly, they say, there is opportunity to take what has been learned about change over years and apply that understanding to our lives today.

Gellatt, and Land and Jarman, encourage counsellors to take what we can collectively learn about change and changing to our clients, to guide them in understanding what is happening in their daily lives, help them change their ways of thinking and reshape their visions for their futures. Challenging conventional wisdom and using natural, intuitive, and new kinds of thinking, counsellors can help clients find new and surprising answers to seemingly complex and apparently 'unchartered' problems.

Richard Beckhard and Wendy Pritchard (1992) in *Changing the Essence*, noted that business organisations face the dilemma of finding a balance between managing current and short-term work and managing the profound changes required to ensure a positive future. The same is true for counsellors who face similar dilemmas—how do we balance the need to cope skilfully with immediate, short-term problems that our clients present to us with a responsibility to manage creatively profound changes in thinking that we, and our clients, require to visualise and carve positive personal futures?

Changing one's mind is an essential decision-making skill. Keeping the mind open is another. Counsellors can lead the way with positive uncertainty—a flexible, ambidextrous approach to managing change—encourage the use of both the rational and intuitive mind, and incorporate techniques for making up one's mind and changing it. Positive uncertainty helps clients deal with ambiguity, accept inconsistency, and utilise the intuitive side of choosing.

The trouble with understanding what Gellatt was suggesting to me during Irene's and Dan's time with me was that I seemed to rely more on that part of my mind that was intuitive. My rational mind could tell the sequence of events that led to Dan's trauma, for instance, and record the signposts that indicated his choices and his decision-making, the evidences of his progress—physical healing, acceptance that his body no longer could sustain his work aspirations, and signals of his longing for the good times that had averted him but not his brother. It seemed my intuitive mind was foremost in the talking we shared. I did not know how to record why the talking had helped Dan to the point of admitting the ambiguity of his longing—he was craving the year he had missed at school and before him was a life of hope.

Gellatt's influence inspired me and I kept beside me his 'guidelines' for some years. I wonder now whether this kind of mantric act took hold within me. There was an 'Information Guideline': 'Treat your facts with imagination, but do not imagine your facts.'

Edward De Bono (1985) wrote, "If you had complete and totally reliable information on everything, then you would not need to do any thinking" (in Gellatt, 1989, p.254). Gellatt was arguing that if one had such information, one could go directly to choice without passing through the process part. The process of arranging and re-arranging information is thinking. In an information society, a lot of thinking is required. Gellatt's 'new decision theory and counselling approach' highlighted three problems with information in his time (1989, p.254).

First, facts rapidly become obsolete. Reliability is limited. How long are the right facts true? What one knows for sure today may not be so tomorrow. The rapidity of change in today's society makes the tenure of knowledge capricious. What one learns today is that what one learned yesterday is no longer true. It has become misinformation.

Second, more information equals more uncertainty. Having complete information is rare. Today one can get more information and get it faster than ever before. Even the amount of information available almost always exceeds a person's capacity to process it. This, together with the fact that one can know more possible options and know about more possible outcomes, increases uncertainty. The more one knows the more one realises what is not known. Like an iceberg, two-thirds of knowledge cannot be seen.

Third, there is no such thing as innocent information. Subjectivity is always present. New science in the twentieth century has confirmed that sending or receiving information changes it. The sender or receiver is very likely to modify information. What information is sent and received and what it looks like depends on what is already in the mind's eye of the beholder, in some ways like Chinese Whispers. The mind's eye is the mental faculty of remembering and imagining. It determines what one sees and knows. Knowing how to get acquainted with one's mind's eye is a good skill to have (1989, p.254). Gellatt does not refer me to which new science he means but I rather suspect he is referring to ideas of velocity, light, time and space that transformed science in the twentieth century. I came across a postulation by Harvie Ferguson, who explains some of Albert Einstein's science, in *The Science of Pleasure: Cosmos or Psyche in the Bourgeois World View*, that offers some evidence for my interpretation of Gellatt's claim.

If we know that the velocity of light must remain constant for any observer, then observers moving relative to one another must disagree about such apparently 'universal' things as the measurement of length or time. And as any measurement must depend upon the sending and receiving of light signals, this becomes a general theoretical, rather than a technical, problem. Suppose an observer A, situated at the centre of an unrealistically rapid train (travelling at an appreciable fraction of the speed of light), switches on a lamp just as he passes a companion B on a platform stationary with respect to the moving train. A observes (that is, his instruments record for him) that light impulses from the lamp reach either end of the carriage simultaneously. B, however, records that light impulses reach the rear of the carriage before reaching the front. This is a simple consequence of their relative motion. In the brief moment it takes for the light to reach the rear of the carriage, the carriage itself has moved forward, so that, from B's point of view, the light still has some distance to cover to reach the new position of the front of the carriage. Simultaneity, that is, does not reside in nature, and in comparing

events in different reference frames, is a meaningless concept. There is no absolute time any more than there is an absolute space. (Ferguson, 1990, p. 228)

Gellatt's emphasis on ambiguity seems to become a general theoretical problem. Structuring ambiguity and uncertainty could be a meaningless task. Was this what I was to discover eventually?

Gellatt's mantras

The word *mantra* is from the Sanskrit meaning instrument of thought, from *man*, thinking, precisely what Gellatt's sayings have to become to be wedged in our minds. Gellatt's way of looking at a "new decision theory and counselling approach" depends on instruments of thought to help clients understand that what they know is ambiguous, that their knowledge is the iceberg, and that information is appraised in the mind's eye. Of course, getting the facts is still part of decision-making and counselling. Counsellors can work with a client's attitudes about these facts and how the client arranges and re-arranges them in his mind to formulate a choice. He needs to learn to be uncertain about what he knows and to seek other, even different, information or opinions. Mark Twain once wrote the famous aphorism, "It ain't what you don't know what gets you into trouble, it's what you know for sure that ain't so."

Counsellors can help clients use their mind's eye creatively yet cautiously. Using information to prepare for an uncertain future requires us to avoid information overload, recognise information inadequacies, and rearrange information into various possible futures—made possible by creative remembering and imagining.

Another mantra that I held close by to inspire my work with clients was Gellatt's 'Process Guideline': Know what you want and believe but do not be sure.

Gellatt very cleverly works through his 'new approach' changing the decision-maker's attitudes about decision goals and rational objectivity. What the decision maker wants are considered decision goals.

In old decision theory David Campbell (1974) says "If you don't know where you're going, you'll probably end up somewhere else" and Gellatt counters "If you always know where you're going, you may never end up somewhere else." In other words if you always know what you want, you may never discover new wants.

Deciding on good goals and making good decisions should not be incompatible (1989, p.254).

Gellatt argues that decision-making should be as much a process for discovering goals as for achieving them. James March (1975) supported Gellatt's approach, "The argument that goal development and choice are independent behaviourally seems clearly false. It seems to me perfectly obvious that a description that assumes goals come first and action comes later is frequently wrong" (in Gellatt, 1989, p.254).

What the decision-maker knows is considered rational objectivity. The new science can make it clear that the rational, objective approach is not always possible or desirable: as suggested in Ferguson's postulation about the effect of the lamp lit by train passenger A on platform observer B's expectation of what the lamp will light up, and when. Gellatt maintains that the client's mind's eye is the heart of invention and it is where reality is created. It is therefore possible to balance fact—to be totally objective—with fancy—to be totally subjective (1989, p.254).

Yet another mantra for my calling was Gellatt's 'Choice Guideline': Be rational, unless there is a good reason not to be.

Being realistic could be seen as old counselling advice—self-deception and denial were things to be avoided. Counsellors can work though with what appears to be unreal for clients. For example, denial (refusal to believe the facts) and illusion (false beliefs about reality) have their usefulness in coping. Gellatt provides an excellent metaphor for this by referring to one's beliefs as spectacles; they change what one sees, hears, knows, wants, and does. Beliefs determine how one behaves. The paradox is that denial and illusion can be signs of delusion or can provide hope and motivation to act (Gellatt, 1989).

Positive uncertainty helps clients by encouraging them to go beyond the question: Should we really know what one wants? It asks: Should we be encouraged to develop our wants? Being uncertain about goals and wants leads to new discoveries. Gellatt strongly suggests that starting with clear objectives discourages a person from making choices that lead to new experiences. New experiences help develop new information, new values, new goals, and new wants. Counselling can help clients develop their subjectivity and challenge and change their convictions. It takes courage to challenge one's own beliefs, and maybe the capacity to do this is

an essential skill. And the most important part of the clients future may in fact be their belief about it.

Gellatt's 'Choice Guideline' is one that I found quite promising at the time. It made sense to the rational self. Gellatt's decision theory and counselling approach insists that decision-makers are part of their decisions. One cannot separate the decision from the decider, just as one cannot separate the observed from the observer. Using the terms "holistic choice" Gellatt says one must use the right brain as well as the left, reflecting on one's future as well as one's past, and being flexible in decision strategies. The process of how the decision-makers decide is as important as the facts, truths, and realities about the choices.

Counsellors following his guidelines, says Gellatt, will help clients remember and imagine, reflecting backward and forward. Persons need to be able to learn from their future as they have learned from their past. Counsellors will help clients develop flexibility. Flexibility, like reflection, is a two-way skill. It involves being capable of responding to change and being capable of creating change. Responding to change may mean changing old habits. Creative change may mean creating something new. Positive uncertainty makes both easier to do, says Gellatt (1989).

Irene might have been constrained by her beliefs about fairness and her own personal traditions in her relations with others. She expected honesty, and confession, not denial and vengeance. She expected support from her boss, not rejection. It would have taken a great deal of courage for Irene to speak up about the workplace abuse because she would have known about others who have been abused and were too frightened to speak up. Perhaps her courage was motivated by their fear of retribution. Before Irene lost her courage she decided rationally, she thought, about what she ought to do and reported Monica's assault of her, saw her doctor about the injury and filed an incident report the next day. Her reasoning though was bathed in tears of hurt. Events that ensued increased her alarm. Something had been taken away from her. Something was lost to her. What she felt was akin to grief.

Being rational might well have been beyond any belief that Irene could recover from such a disaster that struck at the core of her being. When she came to counselling with me and told me her story, I was quite ready to show her how well

she was making decisions, to demonstrate how we cannot foretell how other people will react to us, and how possible it could be for her to imagine a safer future. Was I forgetting in my enthusiasm for Gellatt's sense-making, that clients come to talk and engage with me, not to hear what I propose they do? As I write this now, the way I was being as counsellor jars my senses. It is possible I was suspending the emotion of Irene's loss, and her need for human and compassionate support and someone to understand the jeopardy of her situation in my concern to help her to empower her future.

In my years of working as a grievance counsellor for the State Department of Justice, I knew the protocols for lodging incident reports, hearing them, forwarding them before official tribunals, representing the offended and representing officialdom. No protocols were going to work for Irene. Reflection, flexibility, and rational and intuitive thinking would portray only inconsistency in choices players were making. Emotions, prejudice and traditions of individuals would stand in the way of reason no matter that the protocols were technical practices. Technical procedures would resile from abstracted notions of integrity or identity. They would require outcomes that could be interpretively and iteratively consistent and straightforward, and that clearly set conditions for decisions that could be implemented without dispute. How was I to help Irene in her despair confront not least the legal procedures to win her case? More, how was I to help her in the despair and pain she was confronting as a human being? In some ways, Gellatt had led me to a dead end.

Then Dan too had to face the loss of his year at school as well as the loss of some of his physical capacities. He had a future to work upon. He had an optimistic attitude. He had some kind of inherent inner resilience, a kind of emotional intelligence. Anne Deveson, in her book *Resilience* (2003), found that resilience could be

identified as the presence, at any given moment, of emotional maturity or "emotional intelligence", characterised by self-esteem and self-confidence; the capacity to create and maintain friendship with peers and to gain the support of adults; a well-founded sense of trust; a sense of purpose; a set of values and beliefs that guide responses to the world; and a feeling of having some kind of "internal locus of control". (pp.62-3)

Yet, she says, these characteristics though potentially dynamic are not uniformly applicable. Dan's recovery held its own paradoxes. His capacity to discipline his physical self towards healing was "amazing". He was not always sure that he was feeling good about himself. He was able to call upon his parents and friends and take part willingly in games, sport and relationships. He honoured his emotions from laughter to rage. At times, he does not feel "fine". He looked towards his future purposefully. Though uncertain about what his future might be, he accepted the limitations he then had to embrace. I could say that he portrayed the characteristics of resilience that Deveson listed. I could describe his attitude in the face of uncertainty as positive.

There did remain his dilemma, which was one for me too. What about his not being fine? What about his loss of a year that was meant to be celebratory for him? In what ways could I help him deepen his understanding of his human condition? How was I to bring him to where Gellatt says one should go? One cannot be flexible, adaptable and inventive and *always* be consistent, Gellatt says. The future does not exist and cannot be predicted. It must be imagined and invented. There are two choices: One must invent the future or let someone else invent it. Dan seemed willing to invent his future. My role, I expected, was to help him imagine and invent it.

Positive uncertainty offered me a new counselling strategy basically about adopting and adapting a certain attitude myself and then encouraging the same in my clients—to allow oneself to feel uncertain about the future and feel positive about its uncertainty. Attitude is important in winning games, getting a job, recovering from illness, or standing up to be counted. For me, it is not surprising that attitude is important in making decisions. Following Gellatt was to provide for me the means to develop thoughtfulness about my counselling practices: to honour the role of reason and insight, the past and the future in our lives, and to live with uncertainty and the knowledge that rules and protocols are never universally applicable.

Iconic dogmas beware

In some ways I pressed on with my counselling career, and I celebrated the privilege that counselling gave me to perhaps help make a difference in the lives of

people who consulted me. Yet I was haunted by the question of what was missing in me that was missing in my counselling. I had fallen into a trap. I had opened myself to the currents of opinion and theory about counselling that were finding their ways—whether they were well-tried or not—into the minds of my local and national counselling colleagues. Did I need to go along with them?

Amy Demorset (2005), in *Psychology's Grand Theorists: How Personal Experiences Shaped Professional Ideas*, tells a narrative of the “organistic experiences” that formed Carl Rogers’s developing approach to therapeutic counselling, one that grew from the fierce belief in the independence of the human spirit given to him by his sensitivity and reflective capacity in childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. In his writing and teaching, Rogers attempted to portray a particular viewpoint in psychology to counterbalance the views offered by psychoanalysis and behaviourism during his time. This viewpoint “emphasises the individual's ways of interpreting his or her experiences, and argues that it is these frames of meaning that determine the individual's course in life” (Demoreest, 2005, p. 166). Demoreest quotes Rogers.

I am distressed at the manner in which small-caliber minds immediately accept a theory—almost any theory—as a dogma of truth. If theory could be seen for what it is—a fallible, changing attempt to construct a network of gossamer threads which will contain the solid facts—then a theory would serve as it should, as a stimulus to further creative thinking.

I am sure that the stress I place on this grows in part out of my regret at the history of Freudian theory. For Freud, it seems quite clear that his highly creative theories were never more than that. He kept changing, altering, revising, giving new meaning to old terms—always with more respect for the facts he observed than for the theories he had built. But at the hands of insecure disciples (so it seems to me), the gossamer threads became iron chains of dogma. (Demoreest, 2005, pp.166-7)

Yalom in his post-script for the first perennial edition of *The Schopenhauer Cure* (2006) states that he considers “1895, the publication date of Freud and Breuer’s *Study in Hysteria*, to be the birth-year of modern psychotherapy.” He notes that in the final chapter of this study there is “an astoundingly prescient meditation in which Freud anticipates many of the developments in therapy that were to unfold over the next century” (p.12).

One only has to take an example out of hundreds of books and journals on theories of counselling to appreciate the variance in the conceptual language that has evolved to describe such developments. In Rosemary A. Thompson's *Counselling Techniques: Improving Relationships with Others, Ourselves, Our Families, and Our Environment* (2003), the chapter headings serve us with one kind of summary:

Professionalism in Counselling and Psychotherapy

Client-Therapist Relationships: Counselling Intentions, Interventions, and Therapeutic Factors

Eclectic Techniques for Group Therapy

Classic Gestalt Techniques

Nonverbal and Metaphorical Techniques

Expressive Techniques: Art Therapy, Dance/Movement Therapy, Drama Therapy, Music Therapy, Psychodrama, and Writing as Therapy

Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy, Scheme-Focused Cognitive Therapy, and Paradoxical Techniques

Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy, Reality Therapy, and Transactional Analysis

Classic Behavioural Techniques

Person-Centered Techniques and Psychoeducational Counselling Approaches (p.vii)

There might be more to positive uncertainty than I have so far exposed. In later chapters of my thesis, I take Cherkasova's notion of "sideshadowing as philosophy" as I explore the uncertainties of my clients' lifeworlds and mine as a counsellor.

Philosophy is a sideshadowing activity, for it is never satisfied with the apparent state of affairs but it wants to explore all the latent, invisible and even unthinkable options. Such persistent explorations lead to infinitely diverse intellectual patterns and images. (2004, p.203)

Gellatt is predisposed to have us look forward positively. He asks us to give structure to our uncertainties with "positive" tools, like goal-setting and choice guidelines, and stretch ourselves positively towards the future. But as Cherkasova points out, strongly, our lives are not characterised by either structure or finality.

Rather, she invites us to embrace our natural human tendency to be curious and to wonder. We are philosophical creatures who play endlessly with possibilities that “disrupt our natural tendency to finalise our experience and give fixed meaning to our actions and practices” (p.203).

In the second half of my life when I took up counselling as a serious career, was my conscientious character going to prove an impediment to be the best I could be for my clients? I returned to what had first enchanted me about being a counsellor, to what I realised I was subverting by following popular applications of therapeutic techniques. I admit that positive uncertainty would never work for Irene, and that Dan needed more than career or future counselling.

When I return to meditate on Ferguson’s postulation, I see the danger of espousing techniques for counselling, and following them religiously, as answers worth advocating. I see techniques for counselling turning into dogmas that become entrenched into counselling therapies to the point of being iconic, and that Demorest cautions us about. If I were to create an imaginary of counselling in the sideshadows of Ferguson’s project, I would place parts of my being-self in opposition, Counsellor A moving swiftly and Counsellor B still in the movement of life. When A illuminates an insight into understanding self-as-counsellor, B sees the light but it seems to move backwards first to measure how far it has to go forward to integrate with my being-self-as-counsellor. My being does not in my imaginary simultaneously appropriate moments of insight or of heeding consciousness. My imaginary must be something that holds the possibility of paradox that is something endlessly self-renewing. *Paradoxa*, I must always caution my-being-self-as-counsellor, must not become *doxa*. David Whyte’s poem “The Bell Ringer” speaks to the soul of the one who stands still and alone yet yearns to ring out to the universe that “something some where has changed.” *Doxa* is the ground of square stones, *paradoxa* is the voice of the bell ringer.

Consider the bell
ringer as an image
of the human soul,
he stands foursquare
on the stone flagged
ground, and surrounded
by a circle of communal
concentration
searches in his fixed

aloneness
for a world
beyond straight,
human,
eye to eye
discourse,
in this case
above him,
the collision of metal
worlds chiming
to each bend and lift
of the knees,
letting his weight bear down
on the rope,
creating out of the heave
and upward pull,
a hollowed out
brass utterance,
a resonant
on-going argument
for his continued presence,
independent
of daily mood
or the necessities
for a verbal
proclamation.

Let him stand there
then
for the human soul,
let his weight
come true on the rope,
the way we want to lean
into the center of things,
the way we want to
fall with the gravity
of the situation
and then afterwards
laugh and
defy it
with an upward
ultimately untraceable
flight,
a great ungovernable
ringing
announcement
to the world

that something, somewhere,
has changed.

Consider
the bell ringer
as one of us,
attempting some
unachieved,
magnificent
difference in the world,
far above
and far beyond
the stone-closed
space we seem
to occupy.

Below
we're all
effort, listening
and willful concentration,
above,
like a moving sea,
another power
shoulders
just
for a moment
the whole burden,
lifts us
against our will,
lets us find
in the skyward pull
a needed antidote
to surface noise,
a gravity against gravity,
another way to hear
amid
the clamor of the heavens. —David Whyte (2003), from
Everything is Waiting for You.

Even with the weight of a bell in my hands, I yearn to ring out antidotes for the noisy clamour of *doxa*. In my next chapter, I return to Rogers' phenomenological approach to psychotherapy. My return was to be the beginning of what I would come to learn as the personal growth of my self-as-counsellor. I was to learn over time what Rogers meant when he discovered and named three essential

characteristics of psychotherapy: "unconditional positive regard for one's clients",
"empathy" and "congruence."

Chapter 4. Where theory encounters humanity

*Human acts nearly always make sense. They arise from some
compromise between private impulse and social expectation.
—Barnlund, 1976*

There are two parts to this chapter. The first part focuses on humanistic theories of counselling, particularly the contribution that Carl Rogers makes to the lifeworld I inhabit as a counsellor. This could not be a thesis in which the narratives of lived experience of the grief and loss of the people who populate it, without discussing some theories of grief and loss that have influenced my orientation towards being a counsellor. Thus the second part of this chapter portrays theories of grief as a human condition, particularly drawing from the work of J. William Worden. This chapter emphasises that to be a counsellor one needs to be introspective, questioning and interpretive. It takes the reader further along the way to seeing the ways my self-understanding emerges, through acknowledging and evaluating certain theories related to counselling. They are theories that occur within the social and historical traditions that inhabit me.

Carl Rogers and subjective experience of the world

The term “person-centred something” is highlighted in fields of scholarship today, in fields such as education, health, psychotherapy, philosophy, management, and medicine. We find references to “person-centred planning and person-centred action” (Cambridge & Carnaby, 2005), “child-centred classrooms” (Austin, Dwyer, & Freebody, 2002), “family-centred care in practice” (Langton, 2000), “child-centred philosophy” (Willmott, 2002), “group-centred programs” (Laurie, 2002),

and “person-centred ergonomics” (Oborne, Branton, Leal, Shipley, & Stewart, 1993).

“Person-centred therapy” is an esteemed term in counselling theory and practice. Its creator was Carl Rogers. Amongst the many stories that Demorest recounts from the organic experiences that Rogers lived and that influenced his relationships, one stands out. He was twelve years old at the time. It was 1914.

One day while walking in the woods surrounding the farm, Rogers came upon two luna moths just emerging from their cocoons. He looked in wonder at the marvelous creatures, as large as a small bird with long swallowtail wings, pale green in color with spots of purple. From that moment on he was fascinated. He got books on moths to read about them. He found and raised their caterpillars, collecting the particular kinds of leaves they needed for food. He attentively nursed them for days and weeks through their 12-month cycle, until at last their cocoons opened to reveal the glorious creatures. It was a process of emergence that he remembered “very vividly” into adulthood, and it may have played an important role in leading to his theoretical emphasis on growth and development via an innate actualising tendency. (Demorest, 2005, p.149)

By the early 1940s, after casting aside the authorities that promised to control his independent spirit and belief in the freedom of human agency and choice that would have dominated a career in religion, Rogers became a counsellor. He was fortunate enough to enjoy student and collegial experiences in academia that gave him a taste of “freewheeling” in thinking and being. He developed a nondirective approach in his work as counsellor, reacting against the directive and psychoanalytic approaches to individual therapy he had tried and found sometimes disastrous in their results. His new therapy drew the counsellor to create a permissive and non-interventionist climate for the client to be present within.

Rogers challenged 'the counsellor knows best' assumption that was commonly assumed in therapeutic procedures through techniques that advised, suggested, persuaded, taught, diagnosed and interpreted. He was wary that diagnostic concepts and procedures could be inadequate, prejudicial, and often misused, and he omitted them deliberately from his approach. So-called non-directive counsellors avoided sharing a great deal about themselves with clients, focusing instead on reflecting and clarifying for their clients the ways they verbally and non-verbally communicated. Instead, Rogers placed the attitudes and personal

characteristics of the counsellor and the quality of the counsellor-client relationship as the prime determinants of the outcome of the therapeutic process. He advocated that people are essentially trustworthy, that they have a vast potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problems without direct intervention on the counsellor's part. People are capable of self-directed growth in a therapeutic relationship. Counsellors' knowledge of theory and techniques is of secondary significance.

In Rogers' client-centred therapy, the counsellor is to create a non-directive and growth-promoting climate wherein the client feels nurtured and respected; the counsellor adopts an empathic approach that emphasises and promotes self-worth in clients, and encourages clients to find answers that resonate with their own values and beliefs.

By 1959, Rogers was writing about "congruence" as better than "non-directive":

The "growing edge" of this portion of the theory has to do with point 3, ...[the other two points being "unconditional positive regard for one's client", and "empathy"]...the congruence or genuineness of the therapist in the relationship. This means that the therapist's symbolization of his own experience in the relationship must be accurate, if therapy is to be most effective. Thus if he is experiencing threat and discomfort in the relationship, and is aware only of an acceptance and understanding, then he is not congruent in the relationship and therapy will suffer. (In Demorest, 2005, p. 159)

Rogers was concerned that people obtained, processed, shared, or surrendered power and control over others and themselves. He renamed his client-centred therapy to reflect his belief in the possibility of creating a genuine client-counsellor relationship. His theory became known as a "person-centred approach" to psychotherapy.

Demorest's exposition of Rogers' theory concludes that his theory offers a vital alternative to two theories that have struck the minds and hearts of twentieth century psychotherapists.

It is a theory that puts at its center the individual's own organismic experience as a valuable directive force. Unlike Skinner's [behaviourist] theory in which the role of the external environment is decisive, Rogers' theory asserts that it is the individual's own subjective experience of the

world that is paramount and that determines his or her course in life. And unlike Freud's theory in which the individual's basic impulses are seen as dangerous, Rogers' theory trusts the goodness and growth potential of the individual's internal tendencies. It is a theory pervaded with humanity and optimism. (2005, p.145)

Ann came to see me referred by her boss. Her son, David, had died of cancer, only in his 30s, some months before, and her grief was playing out in the workplace in absenteeism and poor work performance.

Ann was very nervous about coming to see a counsellor. She had never before done this. I greeted Ann on the ground floor of my building and by the time we had reached the third floor via the lift and settled into my counselling room, the tightness I perceived she held when I met her seemed softened and thawed.

During our first session I encouraged Ann to tell me her story, just to say what was going on, how she was going from her point of view, what she was doing in the room. She talked for a long time and cried. Her husband had died ten years previously and her words were that she had just got on with it and maybe that was just all catching-up with her. She told me she had another son Mark and a daughter-in-law and had very positive relationships with them. As well, she had some loyal friends with whom she spent a great deal of time and of whom she was very fond.

David died when he was living with her and she was missing him dearly and deeply. At the time she started therapy, Ann had made very little progress with sorting his bedroom or moving any of his possessions from various places in her home.

Consequently, every time she arrived home she was confronted with his presence. A motorbike helmet sat on her hallway table, and a montage of images of her son hung on the wall in her entrance hall.

Over the work of our sessions Ann told me about her husband, where they lived, what kinds of things they had done together, the boys growing up, her husband's death, and after that, her son's illness, what he had enjoyed doing, his friends, his work, and what they had loved doing together. One day when she came she told me she had moved the helmet. She had not put it away, just moved it to somewhere she could not see it the moment she walked in the door. She had talked with Mark to check if he would like anything of his brother's. Mark said that he would like David's guitar. She had ventured into David's room to "look at a few things" and had, she said, courageously, sorted through his clothes in order "to take them to the Salvos" [the Salvation Army Charity shop].

Each time Ann booted up her computer a photo roll that David himself mounted when he used her computer would automatically play before her. It was time to stop

that too, she said. She asked Mark to change David's photo roll to some beautiful photos that David had taken of scenes around Tasmania.

After eight sessions, Ann reported that she felt much better generally and that her work attendance and performance had both improved. I talked with Ann on the phone later—the day I happened to call was the one-year anniversary of her son's death. Ann had been thinking back to the same time last year. It seemed to me that, though she had been very sad, she had been considerably uplifted by some very precious memories.

As I re-read and reflect upon my record of my time with Ann, I wonder where I was and how I was in the story. Except for a suggestion of empathy in the last sentence, it appears to me today that I kept a distance from Ann. My approach was warmly welcoming, there were no signs that I directed her telling of the ways she had tried to come to terms with the enduring presence of David, who had died, in her life. I was at ease with just letting the process of Ann talking her coping through. I assume that I was being empathetic and non-directive. If I had not participated much in exchange with Ann, how could I have communicated to her my positive regard for her?

Still there was something that I saw missing at that time in my counselling. Whilst retracing my client notes I remembered Margaret. I had not recorded my feelings in my notes but as I read them I felt warmth stir in my heart and I was smiling. I decided to re-write my record of Margaret as a narrative and illustrate some of the lived experiences of my emerging understandings of what it is to be, as counsellor. Yalom encourages me in the worthwhileness of extra effort to understand and convey my understanding.

In what were thought of as successful texts widely used in training counsellors, Yalom knew that "something was undone." Those kinds of texts full of professional prose and jargon did "not permit him to convey what was truly the critical part of the therapeutic experience—the deep, intimate, human, risky, caring (even loving) texture of the therapist client relationship" (2006, in *Postscript*, pp.9-10).

Writing and rewriting is more than a method of maintaining professional records for whatever technical or ethical purpose. van Manen says that "writing exercises the ability to see", and "to write is to show something". Writing, he says, is the "measure of our thoughtfulness."

To write, to work at style, is to exercise an interpretive tact, which in the sense of style produces the thinking/writing body of the text...But we should not confuse style with mere technique or method, rather style shows and reflects what the author is capable of seeing and showing in the way that he or she is oriented to the world and to language. (1990, p.132)

My re-writing practice began seriously and I experimented with my record of Margaret's counselling sessions.

Margaret had come for counselling six months after the break-up of her nine-year marriage to Geoff, the father of her two small children, Christopher and Peter. Both children were in Margaret's sole care. Margaret was referred to me for counselling by her doctor. She has been seeing her doctor for a number of minor physical ailments and early signs of depression.

Margaret and Geoff met at university when they were studying education. After graduating they were employed in separate schools and dated for a number of years before finally getting married. They both continued working until the birth of their first child Christopher, when Margaret took a year off before returning to work part-time. Geoff continued in full-time work and received a number of promotions over his years of continuous employment.

Margaret continued working part-time until the birth of their second child Peter, when she again took a year off to care for both children at home. She was about to return to work when Geoff came home one night and said he was leaving her for a woman he had met at work. Two weeks later Geoff moved out of the family home. He has not contacted Margaret or the children since. Margaret has not felt well enough to return to work and is now in danger of losing her job.

In writing what follows, my main concern is to recognise the ways I was communicating my empathy and unconditional positive regard for Margaret through active listening, reflection of feeling and meaning and summarising—micro-skills referred to in Rogers and others—to achieve genuine interaction between counsellor, me and client, Margaret. I try out writing in the present tense to bring my memory and sensitivities of the time closer to me.

I am totally supportive of Margaret and work with her to recognise her personal strengths and to find answers that are compatible with her values and beliefs.

I am active in preparing my counselling room in anticipation of Margaret's session. I place the chairs face-to-face, check the position of the curtains to minimise glare, and place a box of tissues within easy reach of Margaret's chair. I also spend a couple of quiet moments clearing my mind of prevailing thoughts from the previous client in order to give Margaret my full attention.

Margaret arrives and I spend some time developing rapport, attempting to allow her to feel welcome and at ease. I initiate this by asking Margaret to sit down and make general conversation about the weather, and about how her day has been so far. I formally begin the session by asking Margaret whether she has received my email sent to confirm her appointment details and information about the private and confidential nature of my counselling service. Margaret confirms she had received the email and she says that it is very useful and informative.

I ask Margaret if she has any questions that may not have been covered in the information email that I sent to her and she says no. I ask her to share with me her reasons for coming to counselling, and ask if she knows what to expect in the counselling situation.

I am especially vigilant to establish and maintain good eye contact and sit with my shoulders back and arms open. I wait for Margaret to start speaking. Margaret looks down at the floor during some long moments of silence. She looks up and speaks and I see tears in her eyes. She says, "My husband left me for another woman six months ago and I just don't seem to be able to get on with my life."

I acknowledge to myself Margaret's emotions and I make a mental note that she may benefit from me adopting a person-centred approach to her counselling. I hope this approach will allow Margaret to tell her story. It requires me as counsellor to be supportive and compassionate, to walk with Margaret through her story. I believe it will help her voice her feelings of loss.

I carefully acknowledge what Margaret says and I paraphrase and reflect feeling, "It sounds as though you are devastated by the loss of your marriage."

Margaret replies, "Yes I am, but it was six months ago, I should be getting on with my life by now. That's what my family and friends are saying anyway. But I still miss Geoff so terribly and the boys cry for him every night at bedtime."

And I say, "So, am I right in saying that you and the boys are still heartbroken yet friends and family think you should be over it by now?"

Margaret says, "Yes, that's about it. Maybe I should be over him by now. What do you think?"

I avoid answering Margaret's direct question, and say, "Let me ask you, Margaret. Do you think six months is long enough to mourn the loss of a long-term intimate relationship?" (Was there something else for me to say between Margaret's question and mine?)

Margaret shakes her head emphatically, "No, I don't," she says.

I say, "And I'm thinking, Margaret, that you're the only one who knows how it feels to have lost your relationship with Geoff." (There, I bridged the gap.)

Margaret nods and continues telling the story of her life in the past six months. She pauses occasionally to wipe her reddened eyes with a tissue from the box nearby. She describes physical and emotional upheaval as she struggles to cope with looking after her children on a limited income. She also voices her fears and uncertainty about her own and her children's future.

I attend to Margaret's emotions and I use encouraging comments and reflections of feelings to confirm and validate her feelings. (What feelings of mine did I share? In what ways did I convey them to Margaret?)

After one of many silences, during which I too remain silent and still attentive, Margaret looks up at me without speaking. I decide this is an opportune time to summarise some of the issues Margaret has raised so far, and I say, "Margaret, you've described a huge upheaval in your life in the past six months that has meant reorganising your life in many ways. You have taken on the sole responsibility for two children, managing the house and finances and at the same time dealing with the emotional loss of your marriage. That sounds like an awful lot to deal with at once."

Margaret replies slowly. "Yes, I suppose it is when you put it all together." Her voice softens and breaks as she remembers another time. "It didn't seem so daunting when Geoff was there to help."

I nod.

Through continued bursts of tears Margaret describes her childhood dream of being married with children and the emptiness she now feels having lost that dream so suddenly. She also voices feelings of anger and self-recrimination for not being able to cope with her new circumstances as a sole parent.

I keep my mind and questions open as I explore with Margaret her feelings of anger and also clarify the meaning of what being a 'good mother' means to her. Margaret talks about memories of her own mother who did not work outside the home and was always waiting for her when she returned home from school. Remembering her mother as always present to her after school leads us into a discussion of differences in parenting styles of the past and today. Today Margaret is

one of many parents who assume a gigantic task that must combine responsibilities of homemaking, parenting and external work.

Margaret then says "Yes, I suppose being a mother has changed a lot since my Mum's time."

I nod again encouragingly.

Margaret goes on to describe how much she missed working outside the home and having a career. I wonder whether, when I frown with Margaret, smile with her and exchange wistful glances upward, if Margaret senses my response as one who supports her. I hope so. I offer her open questions to explore what she likes about her work and what she likes about her strengths and capabilities.

Margaret looks down at the floor for some moments, and says, "You know, maybe I could negotiate to return to work part-time for a while until I can get my life organised a bit better? I have a few friends who might be able to help me out with picking the boys up from childcare if I need to work late occasionally."

I hope to help Margaret take a positive step forward, to help her turn this possibility into action. I say, "So you think working part-time with some childcare support from friends might be the way to go, Margaret?"

Margaret looks at me and holds my eyes intently as does one who is in the middle of making a decision "Yes, I think I'll put the idea to my boss on Monday."

From there, Margaret's talk slows and she sits back in her chair and assumes a more relaxed posture. I ask if there is anything else she would like to talk about on this day. Looking at her watch Margaret replies that she will need to leave to pick the boys up from the childcare centre. She also says she would like to come back though the next week.

I tell her she is most welcome to make a time to meet with me whenever she wishes. I see her to the door and she leaves. Margaret looks tired but she also looks more relaxed.

I return to my chair and deliberately and reflectively question my practice. Did I give Margaret enough freedom to voice her emotional pain? In what ways did I feel I was able to acknowledge her self-expectations? In what ways did I believe I was genuine and able to express "unconditional positive regard" for Margaret? Would I be able to affirm to myself that the atmosphere in my counselling room allowed empathy to be present? In what ways might I have otherwise responded to Margaret's emotions, or to her? What assumption was I making about what was happening in her life? To what extent did I permit myself to enter Margaret's subjective world? Did I hold myself aloof? Might I have appeared self-complacent? I remind myself to

encourage not reprimand me. I turn to my diary and begin to list my reflections in dot points before I set out for lunch.

Margaret had been able to articulate and explore her feelings associated with the loss of her marriage and loss of certainty and came to acknowledge that her expectations of herself were unrealistic. Best of all my observations, she found another way to imagine a new life and strategies to make it work for her. I had wanted Margaret to feel free to voice her emotional pain in an atmosphere of empathy, genuineness and unconditional positive regard. In this initial session, whatever my doubts were about how I was conducting myself, I could see the possibilities of a genuine relationship developing between us.

Joe Kincheloe begins a chapter about the quest for certainty in his book, *Teachers as Reserachers: Qualitative Inquiry as a Path to Empowerment* (2003), with “a history of certainty.” He gains insight from Julian Jaynes who “in *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (1976) presented a grand theory of the development of human consciousness and its relationship to the development of human history” (p. 141). If Jaynes' thesis is correct, this means, for Kincheloe, that

social and educational researchers find themselves as players in a larger historical context where human beings have searched for certainty in an attempt to regain a lost security. ... researchers have searched for a method (a means) which is never-changing, an anchor in a stormy sea of ambiguity. ... [In] the post-positivistic age...human beings will no longer be crippled by the quest for certainty. As a result, humans would find greater comfort with ambiguity. In their pursuit of knowledge, researchers would abandon the search for an Absolute Method, utilising a wide diversity of research methods to study a wide diversity of topics. (Pp.142-143)

In my new narrative record of Margaret's first session with me, I can see that I was embracing a number of techniques common to therapeutic counselling. Let us be free of techniques, said Rogers. Let me be free too, I pray, free of the need to be certain and on the 'right track', free of my fear of losing security.

I had deliberately approached my first session with Margaret intent on adopting what I had been working towards in my professional development—person-centred counselling. Rogers was sure that a counsellor is able to espouse, demonstrate and actualise a set of attitudes and beliefs during a shared journey in which both counsellor and client reveal their humanness to each other and

participate together in an experience of growing. A person-centred approach to therapy rests within a humanistic philosophy that discloses attitudes and behaviours in a growth-producing climate. According to Rogers, when this philosophy is lived, it helps people develop their capacities, and it stimulates constructive change in others. Individuals are empowered, and they are able to use this power for personal and social transformation (Rogers, 1986, in Corey, 1997, p. 207). Could I cautiously say that it was possible my journey with Margaret would become such a shared journey? Would we both be able to find greater comfort with the ambiguities with which our lifeworlds relentlessly confront us?

Rogers valued three particular attributes that he held were characteristic of counsellors who could create and sustain a positive climate for therapy in which individuals could move forward and become what they were capable of becoming. 'Congruence' is the attribute of being genuine and aligning compatibly to real lived experience, 'unconditional positive regard' is accepting and caring of individual differences, and 'accurate empathic understanding' fairly and deeply grasps the subjective world of another person (Corey, 1997, p. 207). If I were to communicate these three attributes to Margaret, would she become more open to examining and reflecting upon her grief, her world and her future? Would she move towards health if the way seemed open for her to do so? Rogers believed a counsellor could set a client free and create conditions that would enable her to engage in meaningful exploration of her lifeworld. Was I learning to do this?

Ann freely chose to shift away her son's motorbike helmet from her hallway and sought help to change the photo roll that automatically started once she booted up her computer. Clearing space for independent reflection, she could free herself to imagine her future without her son.

Margaret showed she could see her world differently from the one she had dreamed. She interpreted her situation in ways she had not thought possible before—to live life singly yet solely responsible for two little people, to earn their living in a humanly rewarding job and to draw in the support of others for the new life she must embark upon.

Abraham Maslow was amongst Rogers' contemporaries. Maslow influenced the adult-centred learning movement in adult education settings, particularly in the

1970's. In both *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1998) and *Motivation and Personality* (1997), he suggested that too little attention was given to love, creativity, joy, and "peak experiences" in adult learning. Maslow's research into the humanistic trend in psychology contributed to the articulation of counsellor attributes for success in therapy—capacity to tolerate and welcome uncertainty in the lives of human beings, express acceptance of self and others, be spontaneous and creative, fulfil needs for privacy and solitude, respect individual autonomy, develop capacity for deep and intense interpersonal relationships, and exhibit genuine caring for others, sense of humour and inner-directedness, and have an open and fresh attitude towards life (1968, 1970).

Such a positive view of human inclination has significant implications for the practice of therapy. If we believe that every individual possesses intrinsic inner capacities that might help her to move towards psychological health, we might also believe that as counsellor we could responsibly expect our client to take primary responsibility for her own healing. When as counsellor we espouse and act upon a person-centred approach to counselling, we might respect our role to nourish and encourage our client's capacity for self-awareness and ability to make decisions for their own well-being.

Gadamer insists that constant introspection is necessary for questioning the value of self and method as well as the problem under investigation. Discovering the right way to act is about interpreting. For Gadamer, interpreting is "an activity of mind in which subject, object and mental processes meet and act upon one another" (in Dove, 1997, p.140)". If a person-centred therapy permits the counsellor a creative and positive attitude to work with what is right for the person as client, how does she perform as a counsellor? In my narratives of counselling work with Ann or Margaret, did this counsellor focus on how her client acts in the world with others, how she herself can move forward in constructive directions, and how she can successfully encounter obstacles to them from within her self and from outside her self? If this counsellor is one whose orientation to the world of being is humanistic, and who is able to challenge her clients to make changes that will lead them to live fully and authentically in their lifeworlds, did she also take to heart that the task of existing is a continuing struggle and involves something much more complex than solving problems?

For Rogers, person-centred therapy could never be a fixed and complete theory. It could never be an "Absolute Method." He hoped that others would view his understanding as a set of tentative principles relating to how the therapy process develops as something phenomenal. Person-centred therapy is conducive, forging special personal relationships between counsellor and client. Being present for a client to develop a relationship with another person who is on the outer edge of her daily relationships, a counsellor can help a client do what her client could not do alone. A counsellor can be immediately present and accessible to her client to help her client focus on the here-and-now experience.

Rogers developed his person-centred approach to psychotherapy through years of trial, review and evaluation. His rigorous recollections and questioning of the therapy sessions that he audio-recorded were often ironically humbling for him. He made errors of interpretation that he came to understand only years later. He could always see how he could have been with his clients in better ways than he was.

Through humility and courage, Rogers taught, we can learn to be modestly transparent to others—allowing others to see us as we really are, true to ourselves upon our human inclination toward the truth. Our task as counsellors is no longer to see ourselves as the centre of our universe, but as part of a greater complexity to which we belong and owe our lives. We have to be as transparent and open as possible so that 'light'—existence, metaphorically speaking—can shine into our sight. Emmy van Deurzen and Martin Adams say that when this happens, the person can simultaneously and reciprocally be lit up and light up the world. This is what it means to be a part of the world while also being of it and being for it. In this way, we contemplate human existence in a philosophical manner. We gain perspective on what really matters and what is incidental (2011, p.35).

Over the years person-centred therapy has moved increasingly toward existentialism (Patterson, 1986, in Corey, 1997, p.207). Existentialist and humanistic thinking have significant connections and significant differences between them. They share a respect for the client's subjective experience and a trust in the capacity of the client to make positive and constructive conscious choices. They have in common an emphasis on the vocabulary of freedom, choice, values, personal responsibility, autonomy, purpose and meaning. They differ in that existentialists take the position that we are faced with the anxiety of choosing

to create a never secure identity in a world that lacks intrinsic meaning. The humanistic philosophy, in contrast, takes the position that each of us has within us a nature and potential that we can actualise and in doing so we can find meaning. Rogers was firmly of this humanistic belief. His work oriented towards optimism and hope. Rogers believed humans develop in a positive and constructive manner if a climate of respect and trust is established. A trustworthy and positive centre is at the core of an individual. People are resourceful, capable of self-direction and able to live effective and productive lives (Cain, 1987, in Corey, 1997, p.207).

J. William Worden de-phased

In this part of the chapter, I find, as I rewrite it, that irony becomes a device for questioning the validity of theoretical models that could be otherwise seductive, popularised, possibly misunderstood or canonised. In my thesis, with due regard to honouring the work of authors who offer people with grief techniques and practices to help them cope, I seek to transcend techniques in counselling for grief and loss with philosophy. Amongst such authors, I might seem to be deliberately contrary in eschewing their perceived, researched and validated counsel. In what follows, I hope my readers will forgive me if I fall short of espousing “phases of grief”. I do all I can to temper any wryness that might come across in the tonality of my voice. I draw particularly from Tony Walter (1999), and Sheila Payne, Sandra Horn and Marilyn Relf (1999), who explore changing concepts of bereavement, grief and mourning from cultural and historical perspectives, and the interface between the subjective experience of loss and socio-cultural constraints.

Both sources are concerned with the influence of the concept from normal science that accepts a basic paradigm, such as Newton's laws of motion, on training for grief counsellors. On the basis of such a conceptual paradigm for normal science, thousands of experiments and empirical studies were performed. Many professionals built their reputations on this general acceptance of what one could prove to be normal through empiricism, probability and definition.

My approach in constituting this part of Chapter 4 intersperses summaries of theoretical models (in oblique *avenir* font) that mimic the styles in which the authors originally present, with questioning, interpreting, anecdotes of grief

counselling (in normal font, 11pt) and commentary with help from other authors to whom I refer.

Conceptualising grief

In *On Bereavement: The Culture of Grief* (1999), Walter finds evidence of shifts in conceptualising scientific—physiologically and biologically—notions of normal grief. Walter argues that, once “rogue findings” can no longer be ignored, a revolution occurs to make a new and “better” paradigm, and thus a new stage of “normal science” emerges from the turmoil that results. He argues that the normal science from the 1960s gave way to a new normal science in the late 1980s. What came to light then were theoretical models of grieving and handbooks of knowledge and techniques for counselling that are still popular today. Worden's popular textbook, *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy* (1983 and 1991), with its persuasion that grief can be normalised, is an example of many textbooks that proliferate in therapeutic and psychological counselling today.

Walter identifies an effect of this revolution in a small but significant shift from the first (1983) to the second (1991) edition of *Grief Counselling and Grief Therapy*.

Worden describes four 'tasks' of mourning, originally defining the fourth task as 'withdrawing emotional energy from the deceased and reinvesting it in another relationship'. In the second edition ... Worden says that he still believes this to be true but that it is easily misunderstood, so he [Worden] now prefers to say that the task for the counsellor is 'not to help the bereaved give up their relationship with the deceased, but to ... find an appropriate place for the dead in their emotional lives'. But he still maintains that this 'is hindered by holding on to the past attachment rather than going on and forming new ones'. (Walter, 1999, p.109)

Worden “unreconstructed”, he says, in 1999, was still being taught to the general public (p.109). In fact, Worden's work today appears to the public in a fourth revised edition (2008) by the Springer Publishing Company, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Fourth Edition: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner*, promoted as “the gold standard of grief therapy handbooks” in amazon.com.

In introductory information leaflets about grief and loss, one would not be surprised to find words that say people grieve in different ways, and at the same time assert that

An important aspect of bereavement counselling is to help people work towards making a healthy emotional withdrawal from the deceased person and to feel comfortable reinvesting their emotion elsewhere. (p.109)

As an aside, one even dares to know and tell us what dying people are saying and regretting. Bronnie Ware published *The Top Five Regrets of the Dying A Life Transformed by the Dearly Departing* (2011) and listed their five regrets.

Regret 1 - I wish I'd had the courage to live a life true to myself, not the life others expected of me.

Regret 2 - I wish I hadn't worked so hard.

Regret 3 - I wish I had the courage to express my feelings.

Regret 4 - I wish I had stayed in touch with my friends.

Regret 5 - I wish I had let myself be happier.

No doubt the book would be popular amongst those that coach people into more optimistic outlooks on life.

On Worden with his contemporaries

Grief is a normal and complex phenomenon that has been broadly explained by various researchers through descriptive and process theories. Descriptive theories predictably describe the phenomenology of the grief process in a basic and descriptive way, and traditionally lack an explanation as to why or how grief responses occur. Process theories provide a model for the psychological mechanisms underlying grief and investigate the purposes behind these mechanisms (Barbato & Irwin, 1992, in). John Bowlby's Attachment Theory (1969) is a specific process theory, and enables us to consider the reasoning behind grief in response to death and major losses and the various factors that impact on the intensity of the response that is experienced.

The meaning of attachment furthers our ability to comprehend grief. Throughout human development, continual attachments to others are formed. Bowlby's Attachment Theory proposes that attachments develop from needs for security and safety that are acquired through life, and are usually directed towards a few specific individuals (Worden, 1991). The goal of attachment behaviour is to form and maintain affectionate bonds, throughout childhood and adulthood.

Bowlby proposed that grief responses are biologically general responses to separation and loss. Throughout the course of evolution instinct develops around the premise that attachment losses are retrievable. Similarly, behavioural responses making up the grieving process are pro-survival mechanisms geared towards restoring the lost bonds (Worden, 1991).

The process of grief is multifaceted, with bereaved individuals experiencing major physical, emotional, and cognitive changes. Ann Barbato and Harvey Irwin suggested that grief is a state in which the bereaved person has lost someone or something of personal value (in Payne, Horn & Relf, 1999). When faced with this loss, the most powerful forms of attachment behaviour are activated in an attempt to reinstate the relationship. Worden (1991) described the vast repertoire of behaviours under four general categories; emotional response, physical sensations, altered cognitions, and behaviours.

Grief is fundamentally an emotional response to loss, the expression of which can include sadness, sorrow, fatigue, depression, relief, shock, anger, guilt, and anxiety (in Payne, Horn & Relf, 1999).

Grief behaviours frequently have a similar profile to those found in people suffering from depression. Although grief and depression do share a number of similar aspects including sleep and appetite disturbances, and

intense sadness, these behaviours are generally only evident for a short time in a grief reaction. In addition, those experiencing a grief reaction do not always experience the loss of self-esteem that is commonly found in most people who are clinically depressed (Worden, 1991). However, intense feelings of loneliness and isolation, following the death of a loved one, may become so overwhelming that the bereaved may withdraw from social contact, thereby isolating themselves from support. Such reactive depression following a significant loss is not abnormal and usually dissipates over the first year of bereavement.

Anger is a frequently experienced emotion following a loss and is often confusing for the bereaved. The anger may be directed at the deceased for leaving the bereaved or may result from a sense of frustration that the bereaved could not prevent the death (Worden, 1991). If the anger is not addressed, complications in the grieving process may arise. There is a risk that the anger will be directed towards others through attributing blame, or turned inwards.

This empirical, logico-scientific style of theorising is such a contrast to what I am discussing in the first part of this chapter concerned with the influence of Rogers. Here the researcher-theoriser-writer hides the persons who are grieving behind other personifications— depression, anger, blame and so on. Anger attributes blame or turns inwards. Grief and depression share similar behaviours. Overwhelming reactive depression is not normal. These kinds of texts still feature in university course required reading lists. Must we as counsellors demonstrate our familiarity with them amongst our peers and assessors to maintain our professional credibility? The research by Worden, nevertheless, offers some means of understanding the complexity of human suffering. It gives us some language for explaining why we grieve and recover, or not, in the myriad ways we do.

Walter finds evidence in a questionnaire study by Carol Bayliss that, for many trained counsellors, theory does not drive practice. According to Walter, Bayliss found that counsellors saw the grief process as a phase model as a fact rather than

as a more-or-less useful theory and would often get the tasks of the phase model mixed up. Bayliss wonders whether

it may be that in their practice the counsellors are actually responding to clients as they find them and not referring to the models at all. Even so,... they *see* themselves as using the models, particularly to decide when they can finish their work with clients. (in Walter, 1999, p.197)

In practice, suggests Walter, they may simply be acting as one caring human being faced with another one in distress. Or, if counsellors in collegial or assessment situations, they may use the language of grief counselling training to represent themselves as professional. In the real setting of lived experience, counsellor with client, there would be no need for using such language when the client is just relieved to have someone with her in her distress (p.197).

My recorded narratives do not attempt to diagnose grief according to any phase model and might throw into perspective the value and validity of the counsellor being fully present, empathic and non-judgemental, as a companion during the client's journey through grief. An example is my record entitled, "Amelia's Fear".

Amelia lives with her partner Matt. She and her mother both work in the same hospital. Her father lives in a different city. Amelia is in fear of losing her own life. She is pregnant. She fears she will take her own life by driving her car through the barricades of the bridge nearby. Is Matt the right one for her to marry? She wants everything to be settled in her life by the time she is thirty years old.

Matt has drinking problems. He is very disrespectful and abusive towards her. Before they set the date for their wedding, Matt hits Amelia and turns her hopes to chaos. Matt fights with Amelia's father and isolates Amelia from him. Amelia feels sick day after day. She mourns her future. I listen to her repeating and renewing her story.

Worden on crying, biological mechanism and human catharsis

Grief not only elicits emotional disturbances, but also physical symptoms such as tight feelings in the throat and chest, oversensitivity to noise, breathlessness, muscular weakness and lack of energy These sensations are considered to be a normal component of grief (Worden, 1991). Usually these are transitory, but on occasions may become of concern to the bereaved and warrant clinical intervention. Occasionally physical health may be

seriously impaired, and growing evidence indicates that recently bereaved people are relatively vulnerable to illness (Barbato & Irwin, 1992, in Payne, Horn & Relf, 1999).

Often new thought patterns occur in the early stages of grieving but usually disappear after a short period. However, persistent maladaptive thoughts may trigger feelings that can lead to depression or anxiety (Worden, 1991). Disbelief is often the initial cognitive reaction to the news of a death, especially if the death was sudden. Although this response is usually transitory, it can persist and become denial, where the bereaved does not accept the death. Other cognitive responses include feelings of confusion, difficulty organising thoughts and preoccupation with the deceased, which may evoke intrusive thoughts of how the deceased died. The bereaved person may report a sense of presence of the deceased and may think that the deceased is still around. A further cognitive phenomenon is that of auditory and/or visual hallucinations. Many find these experiences comforting, and assign spiritual or metaphysical explanation to the phenomena, which can help the bereaved to cope with the loss (Worden, 1991).

Although there are a number of behaviours associated with grief that may be of concern to the bereaved, they generally subside over time. Complications in the grieving process or a depressive disorder may be indicated if the behaviours impede a person's ability to function. The most commonly reported behaviours include disturbances in sleep, altered appetite (either over-eating or under-eating), absent mindedness, social withdrawal, dreams of the deceased, and avoidance behaviour in which the bereaved may go to great lengths to avoid any situations or objects that remind them of the deceased (Worden, 1991). Additionally, the bereaved

may feel restless, breathless or find themselves searching or calling out for the deceased. Another behaviour often associated with grief is crying, a response believed to relieve emotional stress, although the exact mechanism by which this occurs is not known (Worden, 1991).

The intensity of emotional response to loss varies according to many factors, including the importance attributed to the loss, the circumstances of the death and the availability and utilisation of support networks. The length and intensity of grief experienced by the bereaved varies depending on the nature of the relationship and the degree of attachment. The strength and existence of ambivalence of the relationship has an impact on the intensity of grief felt. Relationships that include a high degree of ambivalence may lead to extensive feelings of guilt often accompanied by anger.

Clients often ask me if crying is important in grieving. Crying is one outlet of grief. Crying can be a soft whimper, a few tears blinked back or allowed to roll down over one's cheeks, a primal scream, a hacking sob, an ululating wailing, or a silent withholding. The death of someone we love is one of the most intense emotional experiences we face. Tears can accompany any news of a death. Is little or no crying a reason for concern when someone is grieving? Can no tears be wrong?

Worden also suggests that our tendency to cry—or not—seems to be at least partly biologically determined. When we experience intense emotional distress such as the death of someone we love, our bodies produce a number of powerful painkilling chemicals – similar to heroin and morphine. Tears are one of the ways these chemicals are distributed in the body. The tears carry the chemicals to the surface of our eyeballs, where they are absorbed and may serve to ease the emotional pain, and so, from an evolutionary perspective, help our survival. This may also explain why many of us, bereaved or not, feel better after a good weep.

Payne et al, propose that there is danger that if the counsellor does not create safety for the client to tell her story, the client might perceive that her grief is dismissed as 'normal'. If the client thinks her individual reactions do not conform to some model she may feel her grief ignored (1999, p.73). GAP

Jen cries for her dad

Her dad fought the bushfires in Victoria in 2009 and lost his property and several members of his extended family. Jen mourned the loss of the family members, coping "well enough", she said. Her dad committed suicide a year after the tragedy. For two more years she grieved in silence. Floodgates of tears opened spontaneously when she was telling me her story. She had told no one before. Days of crying became weeks of crying. She would report feeling exhausted after a good cry, sleep and feel better when she awoke.

For Jen, there is no crying on demand, no timing planned, she cannot deliberately put her crying mechanism into work, nothing flicks into gear no matter how hard she tries to cry even if crying, one tells her, is good for her. Is Jen's response surely one from the human condition, not one necessarily biologically determined?

We experience different traditions of mourning and crying when we share the ceremony of remembering the lives of the dead and the loss we feel. In the media, we see news films of mourners in Africa and Asia parading with wild grief in processions, beating their breasts and prostrating themselves, sometimes in such frenzy that they enter states of altered consciousness. At Australian funerals, I have attended, not as a family member, I have witnessed the family of the deceased loved one softly weeping, wiping away tears of held back grief with hands or hankies. Other mourners present seem quite stoic in their silence and respectful bearing. There are times though when Australians show and share their grief without restraint. During the remembrance services for the thirty-five people who lost their lives to a spree killer in the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania in 1996, I remember standing in the crowd in Murray Street, Hobart, outside St David's Cathedral—there was no room left inside. Speakers spoke eloquently to people of all religions as they tried to comfort whole communities through the shock and horror of the shootings. Around me, men and women and children wept openly, unjudged, in solidarity.

On Worden's resolution of grief

The mode of death impacts on the degree of grief experienced. Worden (1991) categorises death into four groups: natural, accidental, suicidal, and homicidal. He asserts that sudden and accidental deaths are likely to have the greatest impact on grief.

When Edward died

Baby boy Edward died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) in November 2010. Louise came with Kim to counselling soon after. She was calm in the stillness of shock. Drugs had glazed her eyes. Kim held Louise in his arms.

They found Edward in his cot, not breathing. The paramedics arrived and pronounced Edward dead. Disbelief and anguish washed violently over them. Edward still slept on his stomach at six months old. That Louise and Kim had not tried to change his habit, multiplied their grief with guilt. They leaned on each other— not their families—physically and emotionally for support, and counted on each other for months, unable to move forward, until with two steps forward and one step back through recalling, repeating and sometimes embellishing the shocking suddenness of Edward's death.

When Janet took drugs

Janet, aged 30, has been unable to move on from the loss of her Dad four years ago. She came home from the UK when her Dad became sick. He died within a very short time after. She returned to the UK to sort her various belongings and, more significantly, her relationship with Jim that, she said, had not been going anywhere for years—Jim did not work, relied on Janet for money and keeping house while exploring his own issues around sexuality and dressing up as a woman. Janet was in love with him.

She relates well with her mother, brother and niece, and her dog. But she cannot come to terms with her father's absence in death. She had not been close to her father. Their relationship was strained, Janet said. She wishes she was close to him, wishes Jim was different. She has a job she does not like. When alone, she watches DVDs and smokes pot. It seems she is marking time, waiting for something...Is this how Janet is to tolerate her grieving loss?

Payne et al, expose Bowlby's firm belief that working through the phases of grief was a necessary aspect of successful grieving—for a favourable outcome of grieving, Bowlby insists that a person has to endure the

buffeting of emotion, tolerate the pining, the more or less conscious searching, the seemingly endless examination of how and why the loss occurred, and the anger at anyone who might have been responsible, not sparing even the dead person, ... [only then] can he come gradually to recognise and accept that the loss is in truth permanent and that his life must be shaped anew. (In Payne, Horn, & Relf, 1999, p.72)

On grieving as a "process"

Grieving is a process, not a state of mind, and as in any process, work is done so that the process can proceed to successful finalisation. According to Worden (1991), there are four tasks of grieving, which may take place: (1) Accepting the reality of the loss; (2) To work through the pain of grief; (3) To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing; and (4) To emotionally relocate the deceased and move on with life. Although most people are able to independently work through the broad range of reactions that follow a death, some experience difficulty in resolving their feelings and emotions and may seek counselling to help them resolve their normal grief.

Worden (1991) proposed that the counsellor follow his phased model of grieving with objectives for counselling to (a) help the person to accept the reality that their loved one has died; (b) assist the person to work through the emotions of anger, guilt, anxiety and helplessness that he or she is feeling; and (c) reassure the person that what he or she is experiencing is normal. According to Worden, a person may also need assistance to face a future in which he or she must perform roles previously assumed by the deceased and in which a need to establish new relationships exists. The counsellor is to provide support over an extended time period, and prepare the person for times, such as anniversaries and Christmas that are likely to evoke emotional reactions.

On rejecting the 'move on and let go' script

The 'move on and let go' script that I have summarised in the chapter and associates with Worden, Bowlby and other authorities, features widely in professional development and training for grief counsellors, as well, amongst many self-help communities that support people suffering from grief and loss in America, the United Kingdom and Australia. Walter introduces one bereaved parent who joined The Compassionate Friends (TCF) in mid-country, USA, and was not alone in rejecting this script. For the sake of poetic justice, I set out in lines of poetry what the parent told researchers,

I know people think
you ought to get over things
but I don't see anything
to get over.
It's part of me
part of what I am.
This thing about getting over it
I really resent.
We went up to a TCF conference ...
and they had a speaker there
who was a professional
got no children of her own
but she knew everything
and she told you
how long it would be
before you got over it
and she told you
the stages of what would happen
and that.
I really wanted to get up
and wring her neck
to be honest...
I found it really
really objectionable. (In Walter, 1999, p.189)

Grief de-phased, subjective, individual and unscripted

Consulting dictionaries of word meanings and etymologies of words, we gain a sense not only of the history of a word but the sociological, human settings in which it has been used. Payne et al's consultation with The Oxford English Dictionary (1989, Second edition) reveals that the common root of the words bereavement and grief is *reave*, an Old English word *reafian*, to plunder, spoil or rob; *reavers* or *reivers* were bands of murdering brigands who terrorized the debatable

lands between the English and Scottish borders before the Act of Union. *Reave* suggests sudden, forceful deprivation or loss of some treasure of the soul which in turn brings heaviness to the soul (1999, p.6).

Douglas Harper's etymology of grief shows the word deriving from early thirteenth century meaning hardship, suffering, pain, bodily affliction, from Old French *grief*, wrong, grievance, injustice, misfortune, calamity, from *grever*, afflict, burden, oppress, and from Latin *gravare*, to cause grief, make heavy, from *gravis*, weighty, relating in the thirteenth century to mental pain, sorrow (2001-2012).

Counsellors encounter the grief of clients as keen mental suffering or distress over affliction, loss or death, sharp sorrow, or painful regret. The notion of 'encounter' is critical to the unfolding meanings that occasions of my clients' grief demonstrate in my thesis. Such encounters are unpredictable in their subjectivity and individual responses to disaster or catastrophe in the lives of my clients. Over and again, even if I have tried to identify and name phases of grief from different phase models as my professional training might have suggested to me, I could say I was unable to diagnose or prescribe a counselling plan that I could claim *resolved* a client's grief. For me, experiencing grief never finishes.

After some tortuous years of caring for her tormented son and after his death, Anne Deveson, a well-known Australian writer and documentary film-maker, wrote *Resilience*, her compelling experience of a long and painful transition from grief to optimistic celebration of life. Deveson testifies that grief does not occur in phases.

When Jonathan died, well-meaning friends informed me in kind and sensible voices about the various stages of grieving—ideas which have evolved from the pioneering work of Kubler-Ross—but it doesn't work in any neat order, not in my experience anyway. We all react differently to the death of someone we love ...My natural reaction is not to deny my grief and to know that the more I have loved someone, the greater my pain will be. But it will settle—gradually, and over time ...You fall in love in a thousand ways, and you grieve in a thousand ways. (2003, p.259)

Towards the end of Ruthellen Josselson's interview with Yalom, he says adamantly that there is a pendulum swinging—more programs are starting to question manualised, mechanised modes of therapeutic counselling, "all of which eschew

the authentic encounter”. More contemporary counsellors—and I place myself amongst them— though trained in many such modes are coming to see the superficiality of those approaches. They

yearn for something deeper, something more far-reaching and lasting. And I can assure you they never *never* seek a therapist who practises mechanical, behavioural or manualised therapy. They go in search of a genuine encounter that will recognise the challenge inherent in facing the human condition.
(Josselson, 2008, l.1462)

In intimate human encounter with my clients, if I make myself a vulnerable and searching human being, might I invite my clients to become vulnerable with me? If I expose my doubts, reservations and struggles, might I reject the superficiality of manualised counselling techniques in favour of trying to encounter my clients, as Yalom did, “in their deepest being and offer them a relationship in which they can heal” (Josselson, 2008, l.247)?

Chapter 5. Slipping through modalities: Heeding consciousness

*To see a world in a grain of sand
and heaven in a wild flower,
hold infinity in the palm of your hand
and eternity in an hour.*

—William Blake, *Auguries of Innocence*

Yalom admits that “the language used by therapists to describe any therapeutic approach has never been celebrated for its crispness or simple clarity” (1980, p. 5). As we might note, there are a number of terms that we have identified as intrinsic to a person-centred approach to counselling therapy, as Rogers practised it, that one could associate with existential terms of practice—“authenticity”, “encounter”, “responsibility”, “choice”, “humanistic”, “Heideggerian”, “Sartrean”, “self-actualisation” and “phenomenological”. Yalom suggests that many mental health professionals have long considered the language of existential therapy as soft, with an “irrational and romantic orientation which ... offers a license for improvisation, for undisciplined, woolly therapists to ‘do their thing’” (p.5). Yalom wished to demonstrate rather that “the existential approach is a valuable, effective psychotherapeutic paradigm, as rational, as coherent, and as systematic as any other” (p.5). In 1980, we might surmise that Yalom himself was following the counsellors' ideal of having an approach and showing that there is one that works.

Later, Yalom found psychotherapy “to be under assault from managed care companies which demanded fast symptom relief” (Josselson, 2008, l. 1188). Despite research showing that the therapeutic relationship is the central healing factor in therapy, social work, cognitive behaviour therapies and the science of dispensing medication prevailed in therapeutic practice and training—a trend that

was becoming more mechanised and less human and intimate (1.1185). In the paragraph above I sense already that Yalom is seeking some deeper, disciplined understanding that might include self-understanding and invite his clients into a genuine human relationship with him.

Listening to consciousness

If we followed Yalom's life narrative, we would see him forming, re-forming and transforming his therapeutic modalities. I will return to Yalom later in this chapter. First I want to explore the ways I was gradually heeding my consciousness of what I was doing with my clients. From my notes I narrate below Connie's experience of counselling with me and pause from time to time to listen to my conscious self.

Connie came to counselling because she was experiencing intense anger, and was not coping with her life. She complained of failed relationships with her ex-husband, Mark, and with another man for whom she left her husband. Connie described her ex-husband as manipulative and verbally abusive. She felt that he was not supportive of her needs or her career. She finally ended this difficult relationship by leaving Mark to be with someone who was more supportive of her at the time but she was not able to sustain this new relationship. She could not move on from the anger she felt about two failed relationships and she was feeling isolated from her family and friends. This had an effect on her confidence and ability to cope with her work. As a consequence, Connie sold the business of which she had been proud.

I saw Connie for five months and used an eclectic approach with her, including techniques from person-centred, cognitive-behaviour and solution-focussed counselling.

Connie was a mother of two, a son aged eighteen and a daughter aged fifteen. She shared custody of the children with Mark with whom the children spent a lot of time. Mark lived with another woman and they were to be married. The children had a close relationship with their father and got along well with his new partner.

Despite the separation, Mark was still very much a part of her life through his relationship with the children. He retained good relationships with her family and

their mutual friends who were very sympathetic towards him, due to the fact that Connie had ended the relationship to be with another man. Connie was resentful of this sympathy and of the strong relationship that the children had with their father.

For the first two sessions, I worked with Connie to reveal more of her feelings and story. At times, it was difficult for me to clarify the many emotions and complexities that Connie revealed and I became aware that Connie was very cautious around sharing some information. Connie spent a lot of time trying to convince me that she was a nice person—she needed me to understand her message and accept her unconditionally.

I understood that Connie's self-esteem had suffered especially in relation to her career, family, friends and relationships. The verbal abuse she had suffered had dramatically lowered her sense of self-worth. My aim was to convey my empathy and concern for Connie and to show unconditional positive regard for her. I had to earn Connie's trust in counselling. I was not about to moralise, judge or lay blame. Rather, I hoped to show Connie how to cope with, move on, and grow through her situation.

As I recall today what I had in mind for Connie at that stage, I recognise that I was trying not to lead the way. I can see myself being conscious of what I ought not to do or say. I can say that I did develop a significant amount of rapport with Connie and trust grew between us, allowing Connie to safely disclose some of her pain.

I had five main areas of concern for Connie. These were lack of support from her family and friends; her inability to accept her 'not nice' emotions; her anger with Mark; her inability to let go of him; and the loss of her lifestyle, business and respectability. First, I worked with Connie on two of these issues, her emotions and belief that "nice people do not have hate or jealousy", and secondly, her inability to let go of her past relationships. These two issues continually thwarted Connie's progress and influenced every session. Connie could see no solution or resolution of these issues. In six sessions over three weeks, I closely observed Connie's continual return to these topics.

She could not admit her negative feelings for Mark, her jealousy of his time with her children, and being resentful of him becoming engaged with another woman.

That her children were comfortable with Mark's new partner and enjoyed being in their home made her very angry. She continued to beat herself up over leaving Mark for another man. She was hurt that her family and friends also thought she had behaved badly.

I realised that, until Connie admitted how she felt and looked honestly at her own thoughts and actions, she would not be able to let go. Connie wanted very much to be a nice person but a nice person does not leave their husband for another man, they do not have negative feelings, they do not fight with their kids and they never have jealous thoughts. She needed to reconcile the difference between her ideal and real self.

Next for me was to find some techniques for helping such reconciliation. There was a visual technique I knew about from solution-focussed counselling. The counsellor used respectful curiosity to invite the client to envision her preferred future and then the counsellor and client attended to any moves towards it. The idea was to focus on the present and future, not the past.

As I write and recall my decision to use this technique, I see that I was still calling upon the expertise of others to guide me. Yet, as I reflect on my notes of my sessions with Connie, from a reflective and distant attitude, I heed those moments of consciousness of my decision-making self.

To help Connie begin to express her emotions, I asked her to draw a picture of herself in her home with Mark and their family. She drew a picture of a kitchen in which a breakfast bar took pride of place. Connie had drawn finely lined detail to capture its ornate design. The picture showed her standing behind the breakfast bar smiling widely. She was holding up a glass of wine as if proposing a toast. Behind her was a fridge drawn in strong and striking lines. The rest of the kitchen was quite loosely drawn comprising mostly of box shaped kitchen appliances. In the front of the picture were images that suggested the presence of family and friends.

I asked what her drawing represented. The following extract from my notes conveys Connie's feelings better than I can paraphrase them.

Di: I notice that the breakfast bar is very ornate.

Connie: Yes, I designed that.

Di: You are proud of that...yes?

Connie: It was something that I could claim that he could not take from me. Everyone knew I designed it. It belonged to me.

Di: It is a very big smile.

Connie: It is not a real smile; it is my company smile.

Di: Why pretend?

Connie: It was expected. I had to perform like a monkey for Mark. He needed the social contact but he did not have the skills. I took up the slack but he never gave me the credit.

Di: That made you angry.

Connie: Yes.

Di: How did you feel about him at these times?

Connie: I was angry.

Di: Just angry?

Connie: No, I was more than angry. I do not know what I was.

Di: Was this the behaviour in the home that encouraged you to seek understanding outside the home?

Connie: Yes, I could never talk to Mark. He was always so self-centred, he never once took an interest in my business, and I won awards and everything.

Di: You sound exasperated. Was living with him that bad?"

Connie: Living with Mark was hell, I hated going home, I hated pretending, I hated sleeping with him.

Di: What about Mark, how did you feel about him?

Connie: I know you want me to say I hate him but that would mean I am not a nice person...it's bad enough that I left him for another man...nobody is on my side...they don't know what I lived...yes...yes...I know I never told them...they would not believe me...it would be a betrayal... *(Connie is crying)*...okay...yes...I hated him... I hate him...and I cannot believe that he has moved on... found another woman...my children go there with no thought of me or how I feel...he still has the power...I feel he is still there...I can't escape him...*(shouting now)* I hate him. Yes. I am jealous... how dare he move on...she will find out and she'll be sorry.

I let Connie vent all her anger, expressing emotion that she had bottled up for a very long time. This was a breakthrough for her, and with the release of those feelings, Connie began to work them out of her system.

Using the picture helped Connie to give words to what was happening and recognise her performances to please Mark. There was some distance between Connie and the rest of the people in the picture. "They didn't see me," she said, "I felt isolated." If she had a magic wand, I asked, could she change any of it?

"Oh yes," she stressed and paused. "I'd be on the other side of the breakfast bar with everyone. Mark would not be in the picture, and me? I would be independent and have a loving man at my side."

Connie's admittance of jealousy opened another door for self-acceptance and she was able to talk openly about this feeling. Connie accepted that she was jealous because Mark had found someone else and it burned inside her. The children liked his new partner and Mark did not seem to suffer in any way because of the break-up. He still had all their friends and family on his side. He still had control of her life through her children. Connie had not found anyone else. She was feeling guilty that she felt so resentful and jealous. These feelings were contrary to the "nice" image she wanted to portray.

I worked with Connie to separate Mark's behaviour, from Mark the person. Connie came to realise that it was his behaviour she hated—his controlling tactics most especially. And although she did not like him any more as a person, she found that she did not hate him. With further work on her acceptance of her situation, Connie came to understand that her negative emotions were common to all people, even nice people. This revelation was a new insight for her. After some time, I asked Connie to draw a positive picture of herself in a new kitchen. The drawing was different. This time she depicted many people, there was no distance and the smile, she assured me, was real.

The solution-focussed method is said to be less taxing and less obtrusive for a client. Using the visual technique of drawing a situation gave Connie the opportunity of exploring her feelings through the picture. Drawing herself in a situation outside the counselling room was a way to see herself from another place. Feeling became tangible. I returned to the picture constantly to help her focus her

attention. Connie had something solid to focus on, rather than just hearing her words in the air.

Regarding consciousness

Looking back to those years of counselling, when Connie was amongst my clients, I can almost pinpoint what I am coming to call my “heeding consciousness moments.” With Connie, I see and hear my questioning change. My questions are threading from Connie’s words. Technique and counselling type questioning were blurring into a safe connection between Connie and me. We were becoming two people wrestling with one big problem.

In my heeding consciousness moments, I felt a sensation of one modality of counselling technique slipping into another. Though I was consciously coming closer to distinguishing them by virtue of the thinking and feeling person that I am, I was aware that one modality was only one branch of understanding a whole tree of life.

Despite the progress that Connie was making and her growing acceptance of her feelings, she was reluctant to let go of feelings and move on with her life. I had used a number of strategies and techniques to encourage Connie to let go, but without success, and decided on a “paralleling strategy”.

I recalled some of Connie's experience as a successful printing businesswoman where she dealt with a range of clients including suppliers and the general public. Connie had faced various frustrations in her business and had coped with their disappointments. I asked her about her business, how she began it, what she needed to do to run it, what it meant to her, how important it was for her to remain professional and focused, and what was the most uplifting part of her business. Connie became animated and excited like a person who was in total control of her environment. The conversation went as follows:

Di: So working with suppliers, they often let you down?

Connie: Yes they often let me down.

Di: Did that make you angry?

Connie: Well yes, it was very frustrating.

Di: Did you stop using them?

Connie: No, that would be silly, very unprofessional, I got over it, and moved on. I needed them and I knew that it was not a deliberate act to hurt me. Most of the suppliers had problems of their own.

Di: Were there many who let you down a lot?

Connie: Yes, one or two.

Di: How did you cope with that?

Connie: I let it go, I needed to. I could not maintain my business if I held grudges.

I asked many other questions alluding to letting go of anger and frustration in her business world. Connie had formulated strategies that she used to cope with the challenges of disappointment. I pursued the same line of questioning with Connie's experience of handling problems with the general public. Again she gave practical answers reflecting her capacity to cope in business. After three or so more questions, the penny dropped and Connie got it! She began to laugh, really laugh. It was a wonderful sound.

Her laughing was an epiphany, I realise now, for both Connie and me. We discussed applying her professional techniques for letting go to her personal life. Connie agreed that her talent could become liberating in her personal as well as her professional life.

If my thesis is to explore ways of presenting a phenomenological study of lived experience, I am to depict structures of my consciousness as I live and interpret them from my first-person point of view. I build structures of consciousness from my growing awareness of the kind of intentionality that propels my thesis. My intentionality is leaning towards the truth of something, and bringing into being an inter-subjective relationship between my consciousness and the object of my experience (Sokolowski, 2000, 2008).

To understand what phenomenology is, we attempt to distinguish two human attitudes. Sokolowski says we must distinguish between the "natural attitude" and the "phenomenological attitude." The natural attitude is the focus we have when we are involved in our original, world-directed stance, when we "intend" things, situations, facts, and any other kinds of objects. The natural attitude is "... the

default perspective, the one we start off from, the one we are in originally.” The phenomenological attitude is the focus we have when we reflect upon the natural attitude and all the intentionalities that occur within it (2000, p.42). We carry out philosophical analyses from within a phenomenological attitude, sometimes called the "transcendental attitude."

Before continuing, let us become clear what we might mean when we use the term 'reduction', one that occurs often in texts on phenomenology and one that we find often bears, or assumes, its own word for its meaning. Reduction is a kind of taken-for-granted word. It can be puzzling because the Oxford Dictionary offers meanings that help us make sense of its use in my inquiry, meanings such as lessening, lowering, minimising, lightening and moderating. In my inquiry, I am adopting Emmy van Deurzen's use of 'reduction' in her book, *Everyday Mysteries: A Handbook of Existential Psychotherapy*, in her chapter headed "Edmund Husserl—phenomenology: a new science of psychology". I wish to be consistent in my understanding of the ways this word is used in such texts. The following usage by van Deurzen illustrates how I have come to understand 'reduction' as minimising and moderating.

Once I have enabled myself to focus on whatever phenomenon is confronting me at any given time, I can reduce my natural response even further through what is referred to as the 'eidetic reduction', which allows me to look for the very essence of the phenomenon I am facing. So rather than be led astray by the detail of a situation or a thing, I look for its internal essential, apodictic validity and relate to that. A further reduction allows me to focus on the very internal process by which I am focussing on the phenomenon in this way and this further reduction is referred to as the 'transcendental reduction'. (van Deurzen, 2010, p.38)

Next we must consider the meanings of "phenomenological reduction", "eidetic reduction", and "transcendental reduction." Phenomenology, the study of essence of consciousness in lived experience, focuses on different aspects of the process of consciousness according to three levels of reduction—phenomenological, eidetic and transcendental. van Deurzen describes how she focuses on *noesis* to achieve a first reduction of consciousness.

Through the phenomenological reduction I focus on the *noesis* or the act of my consciousness to purify it of its usual assumptive and presumptive tendencies. I try to see the essential nature and equality of being rather than going about my perceptions and judgements in the usual pre-established manner, jumping to conclusions before I have taken a careful look. (p.39)

I recall one of my heeding consciousness moments from one Sunday about lunchtime. My husband and I were in our car in the traffic waiting for a very nicely dressed older lady to cross the road. The sun was shining. I noticed that independently of each other my husband and I were smiling as we watched her walk across the road. I started up a little story in my head that she was on her way to a special lunch that she had been looking forward to for a while. In a moment she looked up at us and there was a flicker of concern. It was as if she thought we were impatient and hurrying her along, and in a moment she transformed and smiled back at us. And by that time all three of us were positively beaming. It was a magical and transforming and very special moment and as the three of us were smiling at each other, it seemed that the sun shone more brightly.

The word "eidetic" comes from the Greek, *eidetikos*, from *eidos*, form. Eidetic relates to mental forms or images that have unusual vividness and detail, as if they are actually visible. In the act of eidetic reduction, we reduce the forms or images to objects, known as *noema*. Fallen autumn leaves of all colours can conjure many images and memories for us. They are often the subject of poetry. Somehow, when they awaken our consciousness, they touch our spirit.

Once during a blustery autumn afternoon, I had left the gym after a strenuous workout as part of my training for the New York Marathon. I was walking down the driveway of the gym and the wind was blowing, not very strong, but enough to swirl the leaves from the deciduous Gleditzia trees lining the street. It was a rare and beautiful day, the sun was shining and I found myself walking towards an elderly couple outside their home trying to sweep up the leaves and bag them, maybe for mulch for their garden, maybe to tidy up, or maybe they had a thing about leaves and had to tidy them up. They were having extreme difficulty sweeping and bagging the leaves. As soon as they swept some together, a gust would scatter the leaves again. There was a heeding consciousness moment for me when we all three looked at each other. We started to laugh. We did not speak. I

walked on home knowing that I had witnessed and shared joy and love, even hope. Dancing leaves had reduced into another *noema*.

We can thus illuminate with a lived experience something of the meaning of what van Deurzen attributes to eidetic reduction. In that moment of heeding consciousness that the unruly leaves provoked for me, I was focussing on the actual contents of my consciousness in the outside world. I was able to hold aside meaning that I would normally confer to leaves, the *noemata*, and look again (p.38). I was able to discern and connect with a certain apodictic validity—something that demonstrated a truthfulness that made my heart skip— that my conscious relationship with the leaves established: the leaves played in the wind and formed hope.

Now I can turn to the meaning of transcendental reduction. I adjust my consciousness and knowingly take its attention away from the outside world to an internal process that allows me to focus on the phenomenon the burling leaves produced. I go beyond my thinking mind, my *cogito*, which helps me to establish the existence of my being beyond thinking and awareness through a further reduction of consciousness. van Deurzen describes this process as a transcendental reduction that brings us

...face to face with what Husserl referred to as the ‘transcendental ego’,...this ‘pure centre of consciousness’, ...the pure essential self that underlies all mental operations...the pure unit of selfhood which relates to *noemata* (blocks of meaning) through the *noesis*, which is basically consciousness or more specifically the process of conferring meaning. (P.38)

I remember a moment of pure consciousness of death, a moment when no word could give that reality shape or form. I had been called into the hospital. I gently knocked on the ward door and entered the room. There was a Dad sitting on a bed holding a tiny bundle and a Mum sitting next to him. I introduced myself. Dad and Mum introduced me to their baby, all of eighteen weeks gestation, their dead baby girl. There had been grave medical concerns for the baby’s fullness of life and Mum had to forfeit her pregnancy.

I found myself with Dad and Mum in their darkest hour. We talked in bursts of conversation for about forty-five minutes. Every so often one or other parent’s

crying interrupted our words. I somehow felt attuned to their shock. I was able to ask what had happened hoping they would tell me the story of the scan of the day before that told them how sick their baby was. They had already shared stories of scans taken earlier between sleepless nights, decisions, hospital visits, the impending birth, and being distressed and scared. The story I asked them to tell me might have been the worst and hardest of all to tell.

I tried to get them to talk with me about how long they were married, how they met, and about their thirteen-month-old boy. They said they would never be happy again, how unfair it all was. Like an eclipse, death had blocked out all that was beautiful, joyous and lovely. Calamity had defeated the hopes and dreams they had for the new baby, and extending their family. How were they to talk about their baby's death with their family and friends, or about the pregnancy? We wondered together whether people knew about their baby already? What would it be like back at work? What did they have to do next? Did they or someone else arrange the baby's funeral service and what should they say, should they plant a tree in their garden in memory of their baby? They had taken photos of holding their baby, and made a printed artwork of her footprints and handprints. They asked me what I thought it would be like for them when they had to leave their baby behind and return home. I was moved and fully engaged with them. Dad passed their baby girl to Mum, and Mum passed her to me to hold. And I held this tiny bundle. I was holding death in my arms. Now I might describe this moment of heeding pure consciousness as awe.

If my thesis is to represent a study of lived experience, and if I am to depict structures of my consciousness as I live and interpret them from my first-person point of view, even closer to my existential self, from the source of my consciousness, then I am to inscribe patterns of consciousness from my growing awareness of the kind of intentionality that propels my thesis, and ornament the mosaic of my stories of lived experience as I adorn them with conscious understandings.

If I am an agent of transcendental reduction, I can 'see' my existential self. I begin to 'see' why I would answer yes to Yalom's first questions, introduced previously in Chapter 2: "Who among you consider yourselves to be existentially oriented?" Yet, I remain perplexed and see that my inquiry must pursue the second question that fifty percent of Yalom's audience who answered like me found it

difficult to answer, "What is the existential approach" (Yalom, 1980, p. 5)? I 'see', in an existential approach, a pure compassionate consciousness of the human condition.

"Doing phenomenology"

Yalom and van Deuzen are concerned to bring such compassion into healing therapies. Both of them, in their later lives, turn to new approaches to healing. In her book *Irvin D. Yalom: On Psychotherapy and the Human Condition* (2008), Josselson traces Yalom's lifework in a narrative study. The great turnings in Yalom's life that her book celebrates are his writing and publication of books that are novels that bring psychotherapy right into the lives the protagonists live. *Lying on the Couch*, *The Gift of Therapy*, *The Schopenhauer Cure*, *The Spinoza Puzzle*, *Staring at the Sun*, and *When Nietzsche Wept* are amongst his best selling works of fiction and psychotherapy. Training younger counsellors and writing training manuals gave way to his love of literature and philosophy. We see him work with literature and philosophy to show a human condition that revels in inter-subjective relationships. As well, we still see him struggling to find and validate a system of healing.

van Duerzen worries that in the technological age we live in today, we might lose touch with the mysteries of everyday life. In her turn she proposes, in the first paragraph of *Everyday Mysteries*, that

Existential thinking is a steadfast and loyal endeavour to reflect on everyday human reality in order to make sense of it. As a practice it is probably as old as the human ability to reflect. Every now and then the human mind becomes so engrossed in itself that it replaces its humble search for the truths that surpass and define us with the illusion of absolute knowledge and mastery over these same truths. (2010, p.1)

And out of existential practice she comes to "doing phenomenology" perhaps, like Yalom, as a way to demonstrate the value of its systematic rigour as a strategy for healing that works (p.39). In *Everyday Mysteries*, she trawls the history of phenomenology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In the beginning, she draws from Kierkegaard.

Kierkegaard's exhortation to us to know ourselves, and to put an emphasis on our subjective and passionate being and becoming truly like ourselves is not to be confused with a passion for endless self-analysis. (p.19)

From Husserl's new science of phenomenology, she understood that

Husserl wanted to find the Archimedean point at which we could lever the world and change our whole way of doing science and understand reality. He argued that no study of the mind can proceed until we have clearly separated out consciousness from the objects in the world that it is preoccupied with.

(p.36)

van Deurzen commits to using the phenomenological term, intentionality, as it was for Husserl, "...intentionality is what dictates the way in which we are in the world. We create meanings out of our connections to the world and apply these meanings to other parts of the world" (p.37). Being intentional in this way we consciously create our relationships to parts of the world which may be our objects of inquiry. Following her intentionality, van Deurzen uses "a new systematic way to achieve the seeing of the essences". At each stage of her system, she commits to "the process of *epoché*" during which she suspends her usual beliefs about the world. She brackets or temporarily sets aside "distinct aspects of meaning that might otherwise get in the way". She thus comes to consciousness of her situated self in the world.

van Deurzen's approach helps me to practise directing my thoughts and actions to situate my self within the intentionality of my inquiry: to develop a conscious relationship with the object of my study (Sokolowski, 2000, p.8). To develop a conscious relationship with the phenomenon of being a counsellor, I could, as an example of my intentionality, follow van Deurzen. (I *objectify*) I deliberately put out there the content of my consciousness of being a counsellor: *I found myself with Dad and Mum in their darkest hour. (I unify)* I create poles of meaning around which I organise the experience of my counselling: *I tried to get them to talk with me about how long they were married, how they met, and their thirteen-month-old boy. (I relate)* I connect one object of my intentional consciousness to another: *Like an eclipse, death had blocked out all that was beautiful, joyous and lovely. Calamity had defeated the hopes and dreams they had for the new baby. (I constitute)* I actually make something become real and meaningful for myself: *I was holding death in my arms.*

I find it is possible for me to adjust van Deurzen's syntax and forge her essential strategy into my mosaic metaphor. The contents of my consciousness are but fragments (*objects*), van Deurzen's poles of meaning are embedded in the grouting which joins the fragments and holds together elements of understanding such as

unconditional positive regard, empathy and non-judgement (*unity*), one fragment reveals dimensions that encounter and relate to other fragments (*relationships*), so that in heeding my consciousness I come to understand (*constitute*) counselling as real, lived experience.

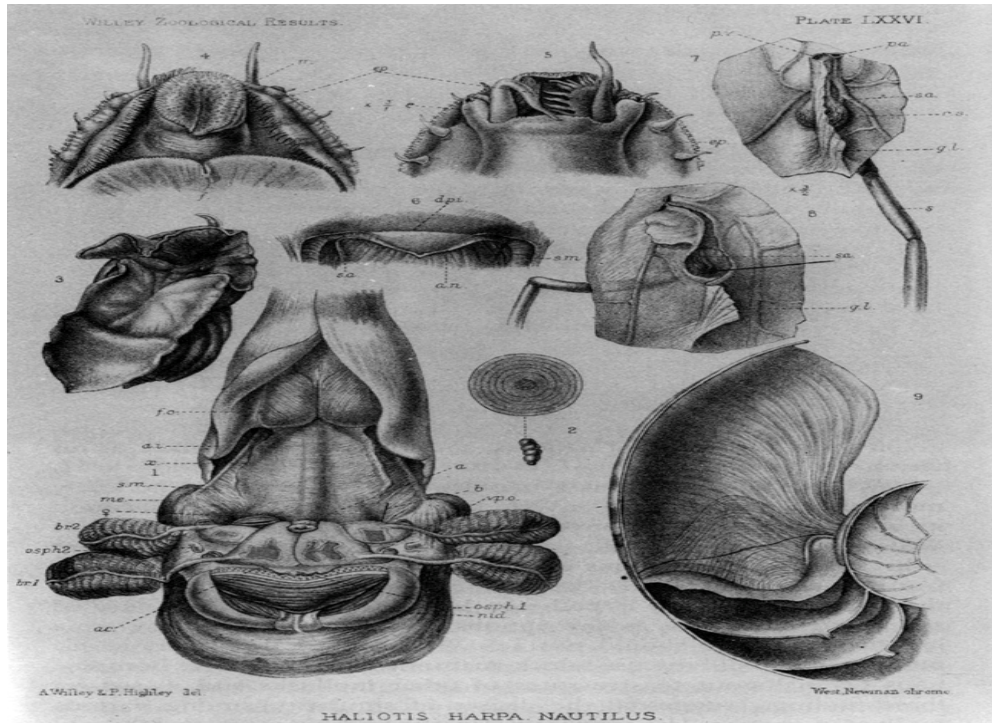
For me the binding together of the shapes of counselling has its source in empathy. Empathy from the chambers of our heart performs a kind of alchemy. 'Alchemy' comes from Arabic *al-kīmīyā*, *al*, the, and *kīmīyā*, and Greek *khēmia*, the art of transmuting metals. In myth, we often associate gold as the transmuting element and with beauty, treasure or goodness. One of my favourite texts is Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist* (1988), an enchanting novel about an Andalusian shepherd boy named Santiago who travels from his homeland in Spain to the Egyptian desert in search of a treasure buried in the Pyramids. Along the way he meets several people—a gypsy woman, a man who calls himself king, and an alchemist. All of these people point Santiago in the direction of his quest. No one knows what the treasure is, or if Santiago will be able to surmount the obstacles along the way. But what starts out as a journey to find worldly goods turns into a meditation on the treasures found within. The story is testament to the transforming power of our dreams and the importance of listening to our hearts.

Unfolding consciousness

Here I wish to meditate upon human historicity using metaphors for the possibilities that living entities offer for discovering how harmony becomes implicate in the chaotic transforming of living beings.

The mosaic of connected hearts transforms into a metaphorical mosaic representation of a living entity that appears uniquely in world seas. We find the nautilus shell only on exotic shores. One of those shores is close to where I live, the beaches that surround Flinders Island in the Bass Strait between Tasmania and Victoria. To find a nautilus shell whilst beachcombing there is a rare and joyous moment.

From its enormous internal chambered complexity the nautilus forms season by season an equiangular spiral. A very early set of drawings, *Internal Anatomy of Nautilus Pompilius*, sketched by A. Whily and P. Highley (year unknown) reveals



its ancient internal organs where one can recognise mosaic-like muscle shapes. We find the photograph above and its explanation in geometer, Michael S. Sneider's work, *A Beginner's Guide to Constructing the Universe: Mathematical Archetypes of Nature, Art, and Science* (1995), in which Sneider shows us that the spiral of the nautilus is one of nature's geometric archetypes, the golden spiral, and forms as the nautilus creature grows larger: the gland that exudes the shell material grows, builds and widens the shell (p.149).



the shell strong and resilient. Photographs of the shell capture its whorling lifeworld. The word nautilus comes from the Greek,

From deep within the spiral, the shell whorls outward to a global pocket. Inside, the shell is clothed in iridescent, silken mother of pearl, nacre, which makes the



nautilus, sailor. Though it has become rare in our world seas today, this cephalopod has survived intact for millions of years. They are often considered “living fossils” (Harasewych & Moretzsohn, 2010, p. 632). Their history is so very deep. The ancients believed these animals used their two expanded arms as sails. The nautilus shell has inspired, geometers, archaeologists, architects, scientists, engineers, artists, novelists and poets over thousands of years. Sneider tells us the story of an invented motto for living.

The Swiss poet Jakob Bernouli (1654-1705) devoted a great deal of study to this particular spiral. He discovered its self-accumulating and self-reproducing nature and gave the spiral a motto: *Eadem mutato resurgo*—
Although changed, I rise again. (Sneider, 1995, p.142)

Bernouli was one of the first scientists to use this motto. It can also mean, I rise again changed but the same. This is indeed a fitting mantra for my thesis.

It was the heavenly mystery and timelessness of the nautilus that inspired nineteenth century physician and poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea! (2012, p.31)

With each new spiral, the nautilus leaves behind its shell and lives on, leaving behind old growth and embracing new seasons of life. Holmes finds strength and spiritual inspiration when the nautilus casts its outgrown shell into a restless sea and sets itself free. Reading Bernouli’s motto and Holmes’ poem, tasting their words and devouring their images, suggests kinship with stories of growth and change that I witness and tell in this thesis.



The unfolding of consciousness from unawareness in the natural attitude to expanding awareness in the philosophical attitude might be envisaged artistically when fragments of mosaic pieces are arranged in the spiralling, swelling whorls of the nautilus shell like the arrangement in this mosaic.

Though more colourful than the creamy nautilus shell the mosaic in the photograph (from Pinterest.com) reflects the essence of the nautilus shell, its history, its memory, its iridescence and its capacity for self-renewal. These attributes are deeply held in nature, available to us as human beings too. In this thesis, I am referring to awakening and expanding and ever-renewing consciousness of our living human lives.

Every intentional act we perform leaning towards the truth of things must therefore be for me a conscious and complex process of interpretation. We may not thus fully capture in our consciousness that which holds a certain truth. As human beings we always welcome certainty of the familiar. For Husserl,

Every correction of an opinion, whether an experiential or other opinion, presupposes the already existing world, namely as a horizon of what, in the given case is indubitably valid as existing, and presupposes within the horizon, something familiar and doubtlessly certain. (1938, in van Deurzen, 2010, p.39)

To recognise the veracity of our experience we must become more carefully willing to put 'out there' the content of our consciousness, remembering and re-living it within our traditions of being and understanding, relating it to the deeper meanings we encounter daily, and reconstituting its reality. The narratives of events in my thesis are purposefully told in simple and descriptive enough terms for my interpretive and conscious understandings to resonate with truthfulness.

Phenomenologists, such as van Deurzen, Husserl, Sokolowski and van Manen, maintain that we perceive the world with a natural attitude—we attribute meaning without being aware that is what we are doing. We make meanings as we are naturally inclined to because of the assumptions we have arrived at through previous learning. It is the recognition of this active aspect of intentionality and consciousness that allows us to 'do phenomenology'. Phenomenology according to van Deurzen is "a clearing away of the lenses that we have interposed between ourselves and the world, or at least a cleaning of these lenses so that we can see through them more clearly" (2010, p.40). Husserl was concerned with the discovery of universal essences underlying our experiences, in the case of which I am writing, unconditional positive regard, empathy and non-judgement, for instance.

If I am to exercise consciousness of my intentionality as a counsellor, there are what I have come to call 'five-things-to-do', according to van Deurzen. (i) I am to be aware of my pre-set assumptions and set them aside by bracketing them. (ii) I am to describe my experience rather than explain it, and describe it over and over again until I honour all aspects of what I observe about my experience. (iii) I am to equalise my attention to all aspects of my experience and not allow some to stand out more than others. (iv) I am to set all that I observe within the context from which it naturally emerges. (v) I am to check all the observations I have described carefully against what is really the case (p.40). To get to what is really the case is not just a matter of describing an experience.

I need to take a step further though. Christopher Mruk says that describing a person's experience—in the case of my inquiry, of grief and loss—is only one thing-to-do in phenomenological inquiry.

Phenomenological inquiry is interested in understanding both how an experience or phenomenon is lived concretely in a person's life *and* how it is that a certain experience is possible in the first place. Instead of merely analysing components of an experience as we might with content analysis, phenomenology attempts to describe what gives rise to these elements in a way that allows them to form a particular type of human experience. (2006, p.49)

Mruk suggests that phenomenology can refer to “an entire approach to psychology, one that goes beyond mere symptomology or only subjective experience” (p.49). He finds Amedeo Giorgi's work (1971,1984) helpful. Giorgi points out that, “contrary to some characterisations, phenomenological methods are not [anti-scientific.] Quite the contrary: phenomenological description and analysis are just as rooted in the scientific method as naturalistic or traditional psychology” (in Mruk, 2006, p.49). Following Giorgi, Mruk assures us about the rigour of a phenomenological approach. It is like a natural science approach to inquiry in that it involves collecting observations, analysing them and presenting findings that can be validated or challenged by others. Phenomenological inquiry is thought by some to be “largely speculative”. It is much more. Giorgi insists that it requires fidelity, it

must remain faithful to the phenomenon, which is captured by the phenomenological adage of making sure that a phenomenon is described in a

way that allows the experience to [show itself from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself] (Heidegger, 1927/1962). We cannot simply impose description on a phenomenon as an operational definition might do, because a phenomenological description must arise from the thing itself. (p.50)

What gives rise to a person's experience? Following is a narrative that takes a phenomenological approach not only to describe a lived experience of counselling a client in grief. It also suggests ways in which the description of counselling arises from the things themselves that are situated in the lived experience. At the same time, one can see that it is not easy to pinpoint the place, time, how and why of these 'things' as they were happening because the narrating of this case of counselling took a holistic and eclectic course. What gives rise to the happenings discloses itself as conversation between counsellor and client ensues and as the counsellor finds insight and understandings.

A study of lived grief

Living an experience of grief is difficult to understand. As I have shown earlier in Chapter 4, many who have tried have documented accounts of lived grief and suggest that a grieved one undergoes different sets of feelings or "stages of grief", such as numbness, guilt, despair, panic and acceptance (Bowlby (1969), Worden (1991), Kubler-Ross (1970)). Authors of texts about grief often emphasise that the order in which people experience and recognise these stages, and that the intensity and duration will be different for each person. Joan Halifax, in *Being with Dying: Cultivating Compassion and Fearlessness in the Presence of Death* (2011), says that people often ask her about having a "good death". Just as she replies that "there is no good or bad death. Being with dying is simply being with dying; each being does it his or her own way," we might say there is no good or bad way to suffer grief, being in grief is simply being in grief, each being suffers grief in his or her own way (p.27).

Using a range of counselling techniques when we work with people through their grief can be beneficial and allows the counsellor to choose flexibly whichever style of counselling might help people move through instances of their grief. As I narrate this story I stay conscious of five-things-to-do if I embrace a phenomenological approach to understanding what happens when I am

counsellor—bracket my pre-set assumptions, describe all aspects of the experience, endow one aspect with no more importance than another, stay within the setting from which the experience emerges, and check out that what I relate is really the case. I am aware that the five-things-to-do are not going to occur in a lock-step fashion. I keep in mind the question, what gives rise to experiencing grief? What gives rise to a counsellor's response?

Kathy sought counselling after the unexpected and sudden loss of her daughter in a car accident. She came for counselling about two weeks after her daughter died and continued with counselling for eight months. For me, the key features of Kathy's grief were her feelings of guilt and despair.

Kathy was a semi-retired accountant, maintaining contract work with a few long-term clients to support herself in retirement. She was divorced and she lived on her own in her family home. Kathy had a supportive network of family and friends, including her father, sister, and her children, as well as friends from her gardening club.

Kathy's relatively steady life was overturned. Alison was 24 when she died from head injuries caused during her car accident. She was admitted to hospital in a coma and Kathy spent several heart-breaking days with Alison, before Alison passed away. In the days that followed, Kathy arranged her daughter's funeral and affairs and deferred her own work commitments.

This was a whirlwind period for Kathy and she operated, as she said, "like a robot". She had been completely absorbed in the organisation of Alison's funeral and had pushed aside her feelings of grief. Kathy says she found some security in the numbness that filled her during that time. She became concerned that she was not coping. She could not move on from feeling numb. People said that she should try to carry on as usual as if nothing had happened. Some weeks after Alison's funeral Kathy became afraid there was something wrong with her, a fear that led her to seek counselling.

All experienced counsellors know that there is going to be a lot of repetition. Sometimes people cannot make changes quickly and repeat things over and over. During our first meeting, Kathy appeared somewhat vague and tired. She described the details of the funeral, excessively repeating them and the names of family members who attended. Her concern that her daughter did not have a will seemed uppermost in her mind. Careful not to precipitate Kathy's capacity to release her grief, I trusted that she would truly grieve in her own time. I simply allowed Kathy time to speak. She rapidly recounted the way in which the whole event had occurred and she referred several

times to the numbness she felt. Eventually she paused. I was able to suggest, "Everything has happened so quickly that you haven't had time to absorb it all."

"Yes," she replied, "I've hardly had time to miss my little girl."

Kathy cried for some time and I sat quietly with her. At one point Kathy apologised for her crying. I said, "It seems that you have a lot to cry about, Kathy. You must have loved your daughter very much." I was hoping that Kathy might become confident that I could understand her situation and that, with me, she might allow herself to experience her grief little by little. She had cried for the first time, she said, and once she had found some composure, I suggested that this had been a breakthrough time for her. After a quiet interlude, I suggested we meet again in a few days' time. I could have suggested to Kathy that she was suppressing her grief in her lengthy story of the funeral. Instead I was trusting in Kathy's ability to bring her grief to the surface.

The following sessions with Kathy revealed a concerning disintegrating of her self. She had been holding together before counselling began. Kathy found that her grief was no longer avoidable and she spent her days crying, wailing, or paralysed in nothingness. She abandoned her daily routines. She stopped caring for herself, her clothes, her meals and her household chores. She came to our counselling sessions dishevelled. One day she arrived and her shirt was unironed and food stained. Over her shirt she wore a sloppy cardigan its sleeves unravelling at the wrists. I had never seen her wear running shoes to a session before. Her dark hair normally tied back neatly was loose and strands of hair were practically hiding her face. She was not crying but her eyes looked puffy and told another story, a story of loss of caring for herself. She seemed oblivious to the way she looked. She sat down heavily in her chair. The look in her eyes appealed directly to my compassion. This is one of those times in counselling when I am challenged to be more proactive and openly express care for my client's well-being. I told Kathy that I was encouraged by her regular participation in our counselling sessions. I explored with Kathy the possibility that she might invite someone to stay with her for a while. I felt that she needed some extra support at home.

Consequently, Kathy contacted her sister Andrea, who was available to stay with her for a month. Andrea proved to be good support for Kathy and provided her with gentle, yet insistent encouragement to face everyday challenges.

Several weeks later, Kathy was moving further into stages of despair and guilt. Her life was "swallowing" her into "a black hole". She would never get over her daughter's death. Every day dragged by with no release from pain. Getting out of her bed in the morning was almost impossible. Lack of solid sleep made her constantly tired. Her

pain was "eating her up". Pain was all she spoke of. Kathy's thoughts were in disarray; she relentlessly moved from one topic to the next. I wanted to help Kathy to recognise the pervasive thoughts that were haunting her and blocking her grief. I upheld my trust that Kathy would breakthrough the barriers to her grief, barriers that she believed to be insurmountable.

At the same time I experienced some frustration with Kathy's continual despair. In despair of Kathy's despair, I sought help from a fellow counsellor. Jane encouraged me to maintain my faith in Kathy's ability to grow and heal and she reminded me of how the resolution of grief can be a long-term process. Together we recalled some activities that might help give Kathy some relief from her pain, and the role that narrative plays in counselling. The meeting with Jane buoyed my hopes for Kathy.

I was soon to learn from Kathy that her feeling of being unable to prevent her daughter's death was going to draw me into helping her confront the guilt that people feel when their loved ones die. Perhaps they could have prevented it, they think. I avoided telling Kathy that she was not responsible for Alison's car accident. Rather I wanted to encourage Kathy to explore her guilt.

In many instances grieving people feel guilt when they face loss. Often well-meaning people will tell them that they are not at fault. Experienced counsellors know that guilt burdens grieving people. Though they feel some relief if they can describe the ways they feel their grief, it is excruciating to find that dismissing guilty feelings does not stop the grieving person from feeling blame. Permitting guilt to find expression and be understood might deepen despair.

When Kathy was able to talk about her feelings of guilt and blame she was able to say how fervently she wished to have her daughter with her still. We went back in time together and talked about how it was for Kathy to be with Alison before the accident. The last time they were together they were planning a cake for a friend's birthday. If Alison had not driven to the shop that day for milk and eggs she would not have died. The memory of planning the cake seemed to fill Kathy with an agonising love for her daughter. I asked if she could welcome the love back into her life. I was moved by Kathy's love and devotion for her daughter. Her daughter was no longer there to comfort her mother. She shrugged her shoulders, swallowed hard and slumped into the chair. Eventually she raised her eyes and smiled wanly at me. I smiled back. She shrugged again and sat up straight. There were few more words in this session. But before she left, Kathy said her despair had eased a little and that she felt "lighter". Both Kathy and I recognised this as a tiny breakthrough towards her accepting her grief.

Kathy's grief and despair continued. Her emotions came in waves that somehow cleared the constant fog of despair that had blurred our earlier work. By this time I felt confident to introduce Kathy to the idea of setting some personal goals that she could endeavour to achieve.

Andrea, who had come to stay with her, had been encouraging Kathy to take on small, everyday tasks such as walking to the shops, or posting the mail, in order to get out of the house for a while. Kathy had done these tasks reluctantly—"putting on a brave face" in public seemed a false thing to do. There was a particular incident at the supermarket. When she was picking items from the shelves, she selected her daughter's favourite brand of biscuits. Feelings of panic came over her—she no longer needed to buy the biscuits. And she could not bring herself to return them to the shelf. Overwhelmed and embarrassed, she left all her shopping items behind and walked straight home. Her anxiety about coping and accepting her daughter's death was exacerbated. I encouraged her to view her mistake as being a normal and legitimate part of her grieving.

Kathy's daughter was absent in her everyday life. On the one hand, Kathy wanted to reject the fact that her daughter was dead. On the other, though she willed herself to accept her daughter's absence, she was emotionally unable to accept the emptiness left by her daughter. Kathy was giving me enough cues to surmise that it was the tension between her emotional and rational thoughts that was suspending her activity, paralysing her to the extent that she could have believed her anxiety to be a defence, a buttress against her loss of control or collapse.

Sometimes when I see a person for counselling I have the idea that anxiety can be like an abutment against the wild seas of emotion. Could Kathy's anxiety have been like a life buoy, a life preserver, a protector in the storm, a storm that she did not want to acknowledge? That she believed that she would never be able to accept her daughter's death might have been a life-saving mantra for her. Thinking along these lines led me to ask what was she afraid of. I determined that this question would lead my questioning in the next session.

Then I asked Kathy how she felt about talking about the notion of fear and what that might bring up for her. Of course people do not always answer the question you are asking. She did not seem to be able or want to respond, to talk about her fear. I thought it was better to leave the problem of fear behind for a while.

Though Kathy did not want to address her fear, I felt it would be useful to bring out the fears and indeed beliefs that her talk was disclosing to me. She wanted her daughter back. Could she say, "It is normal to want my daughter back"? She grieved for her daughter and missed her. Could she say, "I am normal to grieve for and miss

my daughter"? She feared breaking down into tears in public. Could she say, "It does not matter if I cry in public"? She feared never getting over her daughter's death. Could she say, "Time will help me heal"?

I encouraged Kathy to write these four thoughts down and she willingly wrote them on some paper that I gave her from my notebook. I suggested she buy herself a journal to write in and copy these thoughts so that she might begin some journal writing. The journal writing would allow her to identify other distressing thoughts that were possibly holding her grief in check. Her eyes lit up and she said would find a lovely journal to keep.

Next, in a joint effort and preparing to take it one step at a time, Kathy and I devised some relaxation exercises for her to do when she felt a sudden onset of panic or anxious emotions. Kathy said she had used imagery on a few occasions before at a yoga class. I suggested that I lead Kathy through a way of using imagery to help her let go. She agreed and I asked her to settle herself into a chair and close her eyes. I invited her to imagine a warm, white light surrounding her whenever she felt even slightly anxious.

Kathy often referred to her feelings as a fog, and so I encouraged her to imagine sitting in a fog, which was black, thick and impenetrable. Little by little, I suggested that Kathy should try to make the fog thin out with her mind. I wished for Kathy to use this imagery when she felt bogged down in despair. Kathy's journal could be a way for her to describe and remember her responses when the fog came upon her.

At the next session she read to me what she had written when she used her "despairing imagery (black fog)." Only sometimes, she said, was she able to thin the fog. She was coming to understand the idea of using imagery to relax and give her a means to control her despair as time went by. The thinning fog was sometimes giving way to white light.

At this stage her journal took a hopeful turn. She began to make lists which she called her 'one step at a time' lists, errands she would run, planning meals for the week, writing a grocery list and going shopping with Andrea. First, she found herself imagining walking around the shop. Next she drove with Andrea to the shop and stayed in the car. The next time she walked with Andrea just to the shop door. After that she managed a walk with Andrea around the shop for ten minutes. The next time she purchased a small number of items and the time after that, she announced proudly, she completed her entire grocery shopping, (from rehearsal to performance), practising the fog imagery might have encouraged Kathy to use her imagination to rehearse what might be possible for her to do. Her imagination opened the way for her to perform the tasks her lists required of her.

The next session she came with a list of what she believed were her responsibilities, like her tax return, checking her bank balance, and paying her electricity bill.

Each week, Kathy completed a harder task. It took her only four weeks to complete a full shopping trip, although she experienced several occasions of feeling overwhelmed. Each time this occurred she gripped the shopping trolley and imagined white light. Andrea encouraged her to breathe deeply and relax. A couple of times they left the shop, abandoning the trolley, when Kathy felt she could not cope. They came back the following day to complete the shopping. The important thing for Kathy was to accept that at times she could not cope. Andrea proved to be a supportive role model for Kathy, helping her to accept her reduced ability to cope by offering encouraging comments and faith that Kathy would heal. Gradually Kathy was appreciating the responsibility she had to apply her 'one step at a time' approach to other areas of her life. I observed Kathy's increasing attention to self-care and other routines of everyday living.

It seemed like Kathy was choosing and leading her own counselling. I was sitting with her, present with a few suggestions.

Accepting the loss of Alison became more obvious with the passing of time. Kathy moved on more naturally with her life and mourned less and less. After six months, the rewards for both Kathy and I were evident in her long-term improvement and growth. Kathy's ability to develop goals for herself greatly improved, and so did her motivation. She was living independently again and without Andrea around, she took on more responsibility and began to make plans for her life without Alison.

Kathy took to visiting her daughter's grave on a monthly basis. During her intense despair, she had been unwilling to venture to the cemetery. Due to her increasing acceptance of her daughter's death, she was more inclined to visit. She found the visits sad, yet calming. She would tell Alison the things she had left unsaid and update her daughter about her life, as she would have when Alison was alive. Her visits kept Alison's spirit and memory alive within her.

My reward came when we reflected on the work Kathy and I were doing together. I complemented Kathy on her inventive ways of honouring her daughter's memory. I was encouraged to see that Kathy was actively seeking personal ways to express her grief. I was ready to ask her, "Kathy, is there something extraordinary that you would like to do sometime?" Kathy startled me, "A book! I want to write a book!"

Together we worked to bring Kathy's extraordinary idea into reality. Kathy wanted to honour Alison's life by writing a book. She wanted to combine her own and Alison's journals to recount the significance of a daughter's life and death.

Alison's death, whilst painful, had brought opportunities for growth and change for Kathy. Kathy was inclined towards shedding parts of her life that no longer held meaning for her. She threw out material things such as old furniture, files and boxes of junk, and mentally discarded the maintenance of acquaintances with whom she no longer felt obliged to remain in contact. She renewed her bonds with close friends and family. Alison's death allowed her family to grow closer to one another, and these few, special people loved and supported her during long months of despair.

After eight months we agreed to have a break from counselling sessions. Kathy said, "Di, I do not know how to thank you. I will never get over Alison's death and you have helped me realise Alison will always be a part of me, forever. Now I have to keep finding ways to learn to live without expecting her to drop in ever again."

We sense in this narration feelings and emotions of fear, numbness, guilt, despair, panic and acceptance. In the sideshadows are studded expressions of grief in conversations and acts. In sideshadows we can find possibilities for interpreting the meaning of events in Kathy's life. In her article, Cherkasova (2004) argues that philosophical practice comes from the art of creating, entertaining and multiplying possibilities, whether it takes the form of a treatise or that of a story. She proposes that sideshadowing is imaginative play with possibilities as well as impossibilities. It is concerned with the idea that every situation, whether real or imagined, comprises not only what happened, but what might have happened.

...seeing philosophy as a sideshadowing endeavour opens the door to options including those that may be unforeseen or unthinkable. It is characterised by the "what if" questions and holds to scrutiny the very practice of thinking. (p.203)

Cherkasova argues that, at their best, philosophy and fantastic literature insist on a close connection between "what is", "what might be" and "what cannot be" and effectively make effective use of this relationship. Narrating from my situated self as a counsellor helps me find a clear conception of and come closer to a lived experience of counselling. It helps me to heed consciousness of what arises for the counsellor. I comprehend what van Deurzen says,

I move from experience to understanding and back again to experience to verify my understanding. I emerge from the world by lending my consciousness to systematic observation and in observing carefully what it is that I am doing, thinking, willing, imagining, remembering, acting or experiencing. I immediately cease to be fully immersed in the world. By

carefully describing the phenomena I gain further consciousness, which allows me to distinguish *noema*, *noesis* and transcendental ego. I can then begin to organise the experience and articulate it sufficiently to make connections in the wider context. (2012, p.40)

And this “allows me to achieve [a deeper] understanding of the phenomenon” of being a counsellor in the traditions and settings of the years 2012-13 in which I am a human agent.

Van Deurzen thus arranges a legacy for me, and perhaps for many others, in her book, *Everyday Mysteries*. From Husserl she articulates an inheritance for us all—five-things-to-do as illuminated in this chapter and some mantras, as follows, that I might adopt and adapt as instruments of thought to apply with consciousness in my life of being a counsellor.

Époché: *I suspend my assumptions about the world, noting and setting aside my prejudice and point of view, aware of my own perspective.*

Describing: *I describe what I am observing carefully over and again, until my description is faithful to the ethos of the experience.*

Equalising: *I aim to attach equal importance to all aspects of the lived experience that I am observing not favouring or foregrounding any particular element.*

Verifying: *I verify that my observations and descriptions are in line with what is actually the case.*

Sideshadowing: *I increase my awareness of the fact that any one thing I observe shows itself in a number of different and possible facets and that all of these need to be observed to do full justice to the aspects of the experience.*

Grasping essences: *I aim to pierce through the happenings I encounter and observe them using my intuition, my capacity for grasping essences.*

Transcendental reduction: *There is a pure awareness I am capable of in my philosophical attitude that takes me beyond the psychology of my personal character.*

Transcendental intersubjectivity: *I become clear about my personal perspective and can see how it connects and fuses together with other perspectives to form wider horizons of awareness. (2010, p.41-42)*

For instance, one of the things I really enjoy is being in my back garden watering plants in pots, my dog right beside me watching and sniffing curiously. I am absorbed in the usual routine of putting my boots on, getting the hose, patting the dog, and walking out by the fountain. At that moment I function in the natural

attitude: taking the world for granted and hardly paying attention to all the assumptions I am making in order to function in the usual way (van Deurzen, 1997, 2010). And then it happens. I am in a state of contemplation—for some reason, I am shocked into awareness. I see the plants in their pots and notice that the buds are exploding on the branches. I see the fountain and the light that catches on the water and makes it sparkle. I feel awe. I usually miss this in my business endeavour to get all the plants watered before I leave the house for work. van Deurzen suggests this is the time of phenomenological reduction, where I set my ordinary use of the world I live in aside and I look at my environment with new eyes. I see far more than I ever saw before in the water of the fountain.

I met Emmy van Deurzen in Sydney in August 2011 when she was in Australia with her husband Professor Digby Tantam to present at the World Congress for Psychotherapy. Emmy also presented a two-day workshop for the Centre for Existential Practice on Skills in Existential Counselling. Her workshop was excellent and Emmy worked with participants demonstrating how to work with existential philosophy in very practical ways. She talked particularly about how to integrate her understanding of what I have referred to above as five-things-to-do in counselling.

Her work resonates with me. I met her as a kindred spirit. Some of my experiences of working with clients with grief and loss mirror van Deurzen's. After meeting her I wanted to experiment with the way she expressed herself in *Everyday Mysteries*. Such an experiment is for me a heuristic which might heighten my consciousness of Emmy's ways of working with clients, strengthen my familiarity with her approaches, and increase my confidence in my work with clients.

In a mirror I find myself

Following is my experiment in mirroring van Deurzen's experience with one experience of my own. One can detect van Deurzen's actual words in what follows in story font in *Everyday Mysteries*, (p.43). Inserting words that mirror my experience helps me align myself and resonate with Emmy so that I can learn to fully appreciate her message.

van Deurzen, and for the purpose of taking the story of watering my garden a step further, suggests the objects before me take on a new life, and they do in the detail and

the intensity of their existence laid out before me. The world is offered to me in splendour and fullness rather than in single-minded purposefulness. By disconnecting from the meanings I usually put on the world, I open myself to perceive again and to retrieve new meanings. The strangeness of this new consciousness leads me on to the eidetic reduction, where the water of the fountain begins to stand out as a world of its own, and I create a new connection to the world before and around me. The *noesis* of my own perceiving of the fountain holds me entranced for a time, though it is hard to grasp it in its intangibility.

I sense and know my connectedness to the world I now choose to admire and consciously relate to. I am aware of the very process by which this transformation in me and in the world around me is happening. It is a quality of attentiveness and focus that makes me curious and moves me on to transcendental reduction by questioning what is it that allows me to sometimes rush along and at other times take notice and watch the world being itself. I sense the transparency of my transcendental ego, the place of the very possibility of awareness. I begin to see myself as I saw the boots, the hose, and the plants before: suddenly not taking me for granted, but penetrating to the depth of my ability to be in relation to the world and at the command of the quality of my experience. I am rediscovering my transcendental ego: the very core, locality, possibility and essence of my consciousness and its essential capacity for intentionality.

Usually I am wrapped up in my intentionality unreflectively, but by suspending my usual mode of operating and taking stock, I can unfold the world around me that usually enfolds me and purify the source of its meaning: me, but no longer just a selfish me, but a me that is merely an aspect of shared consciousness.

What has this experiment confirmed for me? Moments of heeding consciousness need me to be fully awake, alert and attuned to sound, speech, sight, touch, smell, to all my senses, even to my sixth sense which arises from my intuition or my soul or my spirit. What is confirmed for me is that reason is given to us when we are human agents leaning towards the truth of things, striving towards full consciousness of being human in the world.

In writing narratives of my counselling episodes, first in diary form and then in a form that I can present to others, I sense I am immersed in some kind of extraordinary meditation—in a bounded setting, on a particular focus, compassion in my heart, and intellectually awake to sound, image, and silence. When I pause, I have to blink myself awake. As I read what I have written I see things I have not noticed before and yet I know of their presence at the time the happenings took

place. I find new meanings that are at first intangible and become secure only when I connect meaning and word. It is as if I am seeing myself as I see myself with boots, garden hose, plants and dog. It is as if I recognise van Deurzen's mindfulness, "I am ...discovering my transcendental ego: the very core, locality, possibility and essence of my consciousness and its essential capacity for intentionality" (p.43).

So far in this and the three previous thesis chapters, 2, 3 and 4, I have followed a counsellor's journey through cycles of time, occurring in my lifeworld, when various approaches to psychological counselling and therapeutic healing have been popularly lauded, and academically researched, justified and criticised in arenas of psychology and psychiatry world-wide. Slipping through modalities, I have selected, so far, three approaches which have shown themselves to be helpful to my understanding of acts of counselling, understanding my self and understanding my clients— counselling with and for an attitude of positive uncertainty, person-centred counselling and understanding ways in which a phenomenological approach to counselling can demand and hone rigour in our attitude and in our being in counselling. I slip into Chapter 6 now, heeding consciousness of the possibilities that reading and appreciating the arts have for my self-understanding and for my being-self-as-counsellor.

Chapter 6. Finding grace in the sideshadows of the fantastic

After a serious head injury, Jorge's Borges' character, Funes became almost incapable of generalisation. For him, a dog at three-fourteen in the afternoon, seen in profile, and the dog at three-fifteen, seen from the front, were two distinct creatures. — Evgenia Cherkasova

In sideshadows lie possibilities for surfacing different layers of consciousness that guide the ways we look at the world that shapes us. In this chapter, sideshadows offer, for our imagining, ways that attitude, motivation, history, literature, photographs and art works might be 'fantastic' for illuminating that which shapes our self. Attitudes and motives guide the choices we make through our life's journeys. Paul Thomas Young, in an early publication, *Emotion in Man and Animal: Its Nature and Relation to Attitude and Motive*, suggests, still poignantly for today's world, that "to gain a clear understanding of the nature of emotional disturbance one must study attitudes and motives since they are the basis of our affective life" (1943, p. 65).

The field of understandings about attitude and motives is wide, diverse, steeped in historical and philosophical treatises, and popular in texts about business management. I do not want to go widely or deeply in search of some meanings but I am hoping to find something meaningful that might help me explore attitudes and motives that contribute to what arises for a counsellor who sits with a client.

Young suggests a strong link between emotion and attitude.

To the layman the term *emotion* is often used to designate an attitude such as love or hate, resentment, prejudice, and attitudes of liking or disliking

persons. The same words are often employed to designate both emotions and attitudes. Thus, there is an *emotion* of fear which is manifest when one meets a snake in the woods and a fear-of-snakes *attitude* which may be latent for months or even years without any overt manifestation. (Young, 1943, p. 65)

Stuart Oskamp and P. Wesley Schultz, in *Attitudes and Opinions*, investigate what leads to formation of an attitude.

Because an attitude is a predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably towards a given object (person, idea, etc.), you can't have an attitude until you have some feeling about the object in question, and feelings are usually based on at least some fragmentary information. Thus an attitude *may* be formed if your early experience with an object elicits a favorable or unfavorable feeling about it. (2005, p.162)

Oskamp and Schultz cite an article by H.G. Gerard and R. Orive, (1987), "The dynamics of opinion formation." They recall that Gerard and Orive advanced the notion that when a person expects to interact soon with an object, the person feels an 'opinion-forming imperative', which motivates him or her to form a relatively clear evaluative stance toward the object. One decides whether one likes the object or not. As one's "attitude becomes clearer, it will tend to get more strongly favorable or unfavorable" (in Oskamp & Schultz, 2005, p.162). Young, Oskamp and Schultz and Gerard and Orive confirm, in a few simple examples, a relationship between emotion—to like something or not—and attitude forming. We come to the question: Does forming attitudes towards things in our lives form our disposition towards the world of things?

In *Intelligent Virtue*, Julia Annas stresses that, in a being's disposition, there is a certain disposition that "expresses itself in acting, reasoning, and feeling in certain ways" (2011, l.154). She points out that we do not start theoretically with judgements about what constitutes a certain disposition, and then expect someone to follow the theory as if that someone can motivate a person to act as we might wish them to. A disposition is something we have

...which is from the start an active and developing one. It is not a passive product of a string of impacts from outside; it is the way I (or you), [as] an active creature, develop a character through formation and education. (2011, l. 166)

One no longer has to be a scholar or philosopher to seek confrontation with death and dying in fairly popular but difficult literary genres such as Albert Camus', *La Condition Humaine*, Sartre's play, *La Mouche*, Nietzsche's *The Trial of Kafka*, or Godot's *Waiting for God*. To read Yalom's *When Nietzsche Wept* is to participate in a compelling story—through the event of a novel, not a text on counselling techniques, we engage in an atmosphere of drama, suspense and fear, when a psychoanalyst becomes the healer of a philosopher who is in the depth of despair and on the brink of suicide. In the novel form we become fascinated with the art of counselling and reason and expressing emotion.

According to Yalom, the most valuable thing that a counsellor can offer is her or his self. Exploring self and coming to self-understanding helps us to become aware of our "blind spots and dark sides" and develop empathy for the trials and vicissitudes of others for their grief and for their joy. Knowing and honouring self can assist counsellors to experience a client's process from the client's seat (Josselson, 2008, 1.1210-1224). I have discussed above understandings of disposition, attitude, and motives of the counsellor in relation to fore-structures of understanding.

In the following sections, there are examples that I have copied over years into my diaries from literary, philosophical and popular texts that are reminders to me to be self-aware, to revisit and know my dark bits, acknowledge my qualities and lead me towards deeper self-understanding. In these examples, I detect something in the sideshadows of the anguish that authors represent in narrative, poem or photography that poignantly express the kinds of anguish that my clients and myself cannot find words for. My diary recordings are resources for me to share with my clients and bring depths to the conversations I hold for and with them. When I read books or watch movies and gain insight and comfort from them in the aloneness of being one human being, I find ways to connect with my clients with the gifts of writers and share our human solidarity.

The fantastic that influences our disposition towards things

As Yalom teaches and I experience, conscious attention to the words of others, in the philosophical and literary texts that I embrace and in the popular texts that entertain me, exerts influence upon my work of counselling. The first text to which I refer reveals a wild kind of shift in western popular intellect to be less reserved and more open to public display, concern and discussion of the topics death, grief and loss, albeit within worlds of fantasy, mysticism and adventure.

J.K.Rowling, one of the most successful writers of this new twenty-first century who heralded Harry Potter into the lives of millions of readers, old and young, opens her newest novel in 2012, *The Casual Vacancy*, as popular as all the others have been, with a poetics of death, referring to death as “a gaping vacuum” in which “no amount of noise and activity could mask the chasm into which Barry had vanished” (2012, 1.98). Barry is portrayed as a city authority, a prominent man whose exit in death leaves the city fragmented and in turmoil according to the disparate and sometimes desperate relationships he held with various people in the city. Whilst the young vulnerable life of Harry Potter, always in the greatest of mortal danger, reminds us of our own risky lives and our fear of their mortal end.

In the influences of such literature on the common lives of people, for me, as counsellor, there are many more than ever before well-known, accessible narratives in our media that I can invite my clients to remember so that the narratives can provide us, in our encounters with grief and loss, with analogy, metaphor and story to precipitate our dialogues. Halifax has said, “Although the capacity to contemplate death is an essential human trait, most people actively eschew thinking about how their life might end” (2011, 1.128). Yet, in droves, people buy books about death and despair. They are not run-of-the-mill crime fiction; rather they are literary events that give deep insight into the impulses of being human. In millions, we compellingly seek and choose to experience vicariously the most unexpected and awful adversities of living, perhaps mostly in the hope of a good ending.

We can choose to contemplate contemporary and popular descriptions of fact and fiction in metaphorical narratives that bring us face-to-face with death and its terror. Who can say that our experience is not just as existential when we read

popular novels, when we identify imaginatively or in reality with the circumstances and emotions of a novel's protagonist? In the extracts I take from novels into my diaries, I detect something in the sideshadows of the protagonists' anguish that poignantly expresses words for my clients' anguish that they cannot find themselves. The extracts below become resources for my conversations with them. They give me images and words that are so memorable from my readings that I can "re-paint" them when I am with my clients. For instance, I see Kathy's face "pale and drawn" after the suddenness of her daughter's tragic death, and I can speak to her.

... looking pale and drawn. Death messages are never pleasant ... But it's all part of the job. Bereaved relatives are always angry. Why wouldn't they be? (Childs, 2011, l.264.)

There was no easy way to say it. Because there was no easy way for [her] to face it. She goes to bed one night all hunky dory, and she wakes up the next morning with a different life. (l.196)

From Rowling comes to me a simile. Ann could submerge her son David's motorbike helmet in the liquid grief of her mind. From Lisa Genova and Louise Penny, come descriptions of the liquid in its volatility. The words "replay", "unleashing", a "tsunami" of grief, "forever", and the metaphor of the daily "humble tribute" help me to help Ann express the tumult of her grief and find the possibility of "relief and peace".

...[Gavin]... holding the fact of Barry's death in his mind like a phial of volatile liquid that he dare not agitate. (Rowling, 2012, l.25)

... worst of all mornings, she replayed his death in her mind, unleashing the massive sorrow that still clings to those images, consuming her in a tsunami of devastated grief every day. She thought she would do this forever, that she should do this forever. Her grief was her daily duty, her misery a humble tribute to her son. (Genova, 2012, l.3312)

... Inspector lowered his head slightly. Death always meant loss. Violent death tore the hole wider. The loss seemed greater. (Penny 2013, l.29)

... her heart, but like witnessing death after a prolonged and ugly illness, there is also relief and peace. (Genova, l.3435)

... jealousy, irritation, hatred, rage, grief consuming her, poisoning her.
(Genova, l.3435)

... then the Chief knew, violent death did that. It was an eclipse, blocking
out all that was beautiful, joyous, kind or lovely. (Penny, l.25)

My conscious attention to the words of others ignites the similes and metaphors in my writing of my thesis. Sometimes when these literary devices appear to me they startle me. The subject of inquiry in *Private Readings in Public* by Dennis Sumara is an English teachers' discussion group, whose book for discussion is *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje. Sumara urges creativity in poetic writing through inventing new metaphors and avoiding those that have become "literalized". What he says, as I record, is useful to conceptualise metaphors in the sideshadows of my thesis.

If our language is ... a collection of metaphors that have eventually become "literalised" through common usage, it seems that the only way to begin to understand any phenomenon differently is to invent new metaphors ... to create new images to depict what it is like to be relationally involved with a world that includes the reading of literary fictions. (1996, p.88)

Secrets once hidden

Other popular texts on health, spirituality, lifestyle and so on, appeal surprisingly though I could not say they are eloquently or well written and organised. One could respond with humour or repulsion to the title of the book, *Run Fat Bitch Run* by Ruth Fielding (2012). But the book rescued its title from vilification and changed, virtually, the life of one of my clients, Bron. Her goals were to run, lose weight, and get fit. She wanted to "get off the couch"! She wanted to see if she could reduce or change her medication for her bi-polar condition. In counselling we referred to *Run Fat Bitch Run*, we had fun, and we laughed about the crazy title of the book. Bron ran, got fit, lost weight and, remarkably, reduced her medication.

Perhaps controversially, I have referred in a counselling session with a client to an extraordinary you-like-it-or-you-hate-it 'novel' that is taking the world by storm and has sold more than 6 million copies in 2012—*Fifty Shades of Grey* by E.L.James. It is resource for fun and play in conversation and helps to light up dark corners of despair. Here I wish to suggest that, at least in Western culture, death and despair

are less secrets hidden behind closed blinds and doors and more openly imagined and shared. Sincere authors we find on the shelves of bookshops or online stores like at amazon.com today make explicit that which was once held private or tacit—the anguish that death burns within us.

In my own life and in the lives of my clients we all sacrifice something to the gods and goddesses of loss and grief. In my diaries, I find extracts from authors who genuinely and passionately delve deep into their own life experience to assist others to understand their mortal humanity. For instance, Halifax names her book, *Being with Dying*, and speaks to us all.

Every one of us has had to give up something we loved. We've sacrificed cherished plans or dreams, felt grief and loss. (2011, 1.47)

Yet even from the depths of our despair, my clients and I can see the dignity that is due to each one of us despite the threat that sacrificial demands are made of us. C.S. Lewis wrote, in *A Grief Observed* (1961), of sudden deprivation when his wife died and the challenge to his faith. Lewis loved fantastic literature. In *Till We Have Faces* (1956), Lewis reinvents the myth of Psyche and Eros. His character Orual, ugly and disfigured, spends her entire life protecting her beautiful sister Psyche, and in the end loses her. He comforts us all with the reassuring passage of time.

There must, whether the gods see it or not, be something great in the mortal soul. For suffering, it seems, is infinite, and our capacity without limit.

Of the things that followed I cannot at all say whether they were what men call real or what men call dream. And for all I can tell, the only difference is that what many see we call a real thing, and what only one sees we call a dream. But things that many see may have no taste or moment in them at all, and things that are shown only to one may be spears and water-sprouts of truth from the very depth of truth.

The day passed somehow. All days pass, and that's great comfort; unless there should be some terrible region in the deadlands where the day never passes. (p. 227)

Howard Jacobson's rendering of a father's grief recalls one response to death, Finkler's son Tyler. Worden, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, might agree that when Finkler and his son Treslove part company because there is nothing else

to do, that is, break the relationship and move on, it is impossible to believe that father and son are doing the right thing.

Finkler ... had two sons plus a daughter, all at one end or another of their university trajectories, campus kids like their father, and Treslove supposed they had got into a huddle when Tyler Finkler died and supported one another. Perhaps Finkler had been able to cry with his boys, maybe even cry into their necks. Treslove's own father has cried into his neck, just once; the occasion was burnt into his brain, not fancifully, no, not fancifully - so hot had been his father's tears, so desperate had been his grip on Treslove's head, both hands clawing at his hair, so inconsolable his father's grief, so loud the sorrow, that Treslove thought his brain would combust.

He wished no such terrible experience on his own sons. There was nowhere to go after it for Treslove and his father. They were fused from that moment and either had to go through what was left of their lives together melded in that fashion, like two drowning swimmers holding each other down in molten grief, or they had to look away and try not to share a moment of intimacy ever again. Without its ever being discussed, they chose the latter route. (Jacobson, 2010, p.73)

Literature that depicts possibilities of relief and peace, acts of sacrifice of sons or daughters, or parents or siblings, or broken relationships that transform into intimate companionships, offer narratives where my clients and I can shelter from the immediacy of the environment that is causing us pain. Reading is like watching a movie. Laughing or weeping inwardly is healing too. American poet and teacher of writing, Anne Sexton depicts her darkness from a deep introspective, often with laughter. In *Transformations* (1971), appearing in new paperback editions (2001), she rewrites fairy tales into poetry. In her ending for Hansel and Gretel, we chuckle and weep.

The witch looked upon her
with new eyes and thought:
Why not this saucy lass
for an hors d'oeuvre?
She explained to Gretel
that she must climb into the oven
to see if she would fit.
Gretel spoke at last:
Ja, Fräulein, show me how it can be done.
The witch thought this fair
and climbed in to show the way.

It was a matter of gymnastics.
Gretel,
seeing her moment in history,
shut fast the oven,
locked fast the door,
fast as Houdini
and turned the oven on to bake.
The witch turned as red
as the Jap flag.
Her blood began to boil up
like Coca-Cola.
Her eyes began to melt.
She was done for.
Altogether a memorable incident.

As for Hansel and Gretel,
they escaped and went home to their father.
Their mother,
you'll be glad to hear, was dead.
Only at suppertime
while eating a chicken leg
did our children remember
the woe of the oven,
the smell of the cooking witch,
a little like mutton,
to be served only with burgundy
and fine white linen
like something religious. (2001, pp.104-5)

I could read this poem together with Margaret after her breaking up with her husband, and touch the emotions that lie beneath her grief—sorrow, feelings of guilt and forgiveness. Sexton offers a kind of serious playfulness where studies of our Otherness can unfold.

I'm Calling the Police is not a title we might expect a therapist to use for his or her book, as Yalom has done. At first, it seems to unfold as a series of anecdotes that we come to understand as fragments of Yalom's friend, Bob's life and dreams. The incident, when Bob's briefcase is snatched by a robber and he calls out, "I'm calling the police", succeeding in frightening off the robber and in a warning from the police that he could have been kidnapped, disrupts his equilibrium, tortuously, taking him back to his war-torn childhood. In putting together fragments of his friend's life, Yalom and Bob deal especially with themes of terror, fear and horror of death, meaning in life, isolation, and freedom. Yalom had tried during his life to

avoid confronting the pain and violence of war. He had forced himself into watching *Schindler's List* and *Sophie's Choice* at the theatre. Both times he had to leave the cinema after thirty to forty minutes (2011, 1.73). The story becomes Yalom's story of pain and anguish too. At the time I met Yalom's work, I was thinking about ways of dealing with my own despair while working with a client in despair. Into my diary, I copied the words he shares with Bob.

I don't know how you faced death like that...you know, I can deal with the thought of death now. I am seventy-six, I've lived well, I've fulfilled any promise I had, I'm prepared. But *then* at fifteen...the few times I remember thinking about death then...it was whoooooosh, like a trapdoor opening beneath me, too awful to tolerate. I don't think there is any mystery about the source of your night terrors and dreams. I experience terror just hearing about your young life, and I'll probably dream about your experience tonight. (1.264-5)

The last extract from my diaries that I wish to share is from a philosopher whose character and personality seems to seep through his words. Paul Tillich writes *The Courage to Be* with gentleness, spirituality, patience, reasoning and encouragement to have hope and faith. But he is quite tough. He says, "One cannot remove anxiety by arguing it away" (2000, 1.470). I bring more of Tillich's tough love into my inquiry in Chapter 8 where I explore occasions when anxiety, repressed by grief, might surface, and hope might offer release.

In cultural landscapes

Crucial to our self-understanding and understanding others is our experience of the social and cultural contexts of our times. Barthes, Culler tells us, experimented with the intelligibilities of his time. He had a nose for what was in the air, what might be seized upon and developed into as "the ruling concept of a new project." Though Barthes' was a special kind of mastery, his texts literary and philosophical, refusing to choose between classical and avant-garde texts (Allen, 2003, p.103), he had in his writing

... a superb sense of what will surprise but entice, what shocking paradox or contravention of habit might *take*; and thus the context within which or against which he writes is crucial. (Culler, 2002, pp.13-14)

Victor Hugo wrote *Les Misérables* in 1862 and set its action in Paris during the French Revolution. He tells the story of Jean Valjean, a former prisoner who becomes mayor of a town in France. Valjean agrees to take care of Cosette, the illegitimate daughter of Fantine, and must avoid being captured again by Javert, a police inspector. Marius, the revolutionary who falls in love with Cosette, sings,

There's a grief that can't be spoken.
There's a pain goes on and on.
Empty chairs at empty tables
Now my friends are dead and gone.
Here they talked of revolution.
Here it was they lit the flame.
Here they sang about 'tomorrow'
And tomorrow never came.
<http://www.allmusicals.com/1/lesmiserables.htm>. Empty Chairs At Empty
Tables

That story still bewitches and comforts millions of people today. The operatic movie of *Les Misérables* is a box office hit—Australia's charismatic and adored actor, Hugh Jackman plays Jean Valjean! Though Barthes' mastery lies way beyond me, his concepts and his experimentations with intelligibilities of his times teach me. For me as a counsellor, I find, consciously lived experience and knowledge of our times, in which we play, converse, read and write, are born, live and die, are crucial contributions to understanding ourselves as historical beings.

Such is the pull of fantastic literature. In glancing towards the fantastic, we find more sideshadows for exploring the possibilities and boundaries of our human nature, perception and understanding. Often dissatisfied with the ordinary, our fascination with the interplay of sideshadows engages us with the 'otherwise' and 'other-worldly' and "opens up space not only for crucial questions but also for unique and unexpected answers" (Cherkasova, 2004, p. 205).

In the daily newspaper, we find a photograph of an elderly mother placing a rose upon the coffin of her son (The Edmonton Journal, 1989). He was killed in an airplane crash, along with his wife and children. Her face is contorted with pain, and we can almost see it quiver as she struggles to hold back the weeping which pushes upward from her chest. Everyone is dressed in black, and we can imagine how subdued they feel and act. They walk slowly and heavily as if carrying great weights upon their shoulders. They speak quietly, whispering in subdued tones. The mood is sombre and dark. We can imagine that relatives and old friends who

have not been together in ages are gathered around the graveside. The mother has a man at her side, holding her arm as she bends forward with the rose. She struggles to hold herself together. In the act of placing the rose at the head of the coffin, she is honouring her son. It is a gift given from her heart. In a moment, as the casket is lowered into the ground, she may be overtaken with a searing, tearing pain, as if a part of her is being wrenched away. The woman's face, photographed, contorted with pain bears witness to the reluctant and difficult struggle with which we relinquish direct connection to our loved one.

In the sideshadows of Barthes' fantastic, recur themes of consciousness, choice, destiny, and responsibility, and reveals, as Diana Knight observes, Barthes' "commitment to an *ethos* of human fulfillment." Barthes believed that if we refuse to acknowledge the movement of history through our times, we submit to a closing down of human potential. If we adhere to a basic human desire to live in an unchanging present, we block out the notion of human choice (Knight, 1997, p. 31).

In *Barthes and Utopia: Space, Travel, Writing*, Knight invites us to appreciate the poignancy of another medium—photography. During my time of writing this chapter, early January, 2013, we in Tasmania we were seeing photograph after photograph of the bushfires that were burning fiercely across the State and racing, undeviating, through townships, destroying properties, everything, in their wake. No doubt those photographs will become familiar works of art when the fires are out and we remember what happened. Record high temperatures fanned the fires catastrophically and on 4th January they swept south through the Tasman Peninsula. By 8th January, the Tasmanian Art, Craft and Design Centre had posted the photograph below on Facebook. The silversmith artist photographed lost all her home and contents in the fires. Comments under the image came from her friends and from those who do not know her.



The image is striking. It really is. Haunting also. At the same time-strangely uplifting. —D.

Sorry this is happening to you. You are already showing signs of defiance and strength. —M.

Love the defiant pic. —G.

I do not know you but admire the spirit that speaks so eloquently in this photo. —N.

A photograph, like this one, of what is left after a mad, marauding fire, seems to capture what is real and at the same time fantastic. The fantastic evokes something that is unbelievable, even fanciful, or extravagant, extra-ordinary, irrational, wild, odd, whimsical, imaginary or visionary, surreal perhaps but real. For Barthes,

The photograph is that word and that medium that cuts both ways between sterility and fullness; between banality and ecstasy; between death and resurrection; between the triumph and the defeat of time; between the tame and the mad; and, ultimately and essentially, between "the civilized code of perfect illusions" and "the wakening of intractable reality". (in Shawcross, 1997, p.66)

Knight's commentary on space as a theme in Barthes' essay, "Paris Not Flooded," is salutary. Barthes claims that pictures of floods—and we might find a parallel with bushfires— "instigate a renewal of the very synaesthesia of the landscape" (in Knight, 1997, p. 38). Knight goes on to quote Barthes.

Standard points of reference of the land registry, curtains of trees, rows of houses, roads, the riverbed itself, those straight lines and right angles which are so good at constructing the forms of ownership, all this has been wiped

out, the angles have been flattened: no more streets, no more riverbanks, no more right directions; a flat substance which is not going anywhere, and which thereby suspends the becoming of man, detaches him from motivations, from the usefulness of places. (p.38)

In his essay, Barthes describes the myth of Noah's Ark, according to Knight, as an innocent, happy, and positive one. Barthes, she feels, empathises with our human capacity for mental reorganisation of geography, if only in the imagination.

... Humanity takes its distance with regard to the elements, concentrates itself and elaborates the necessary consciousness of its powers, making disaster itself provide evidence that the world can be reordered. (in Knight, 1997, p. 39)

The point here is that all our texts have power to form, reshape and transform our attitudes and aspirations as human beings living on earth. Texts— novels, poems, dramas, biographies, movies, galleries of photographs and art works—that offer wisdom to the minds and hearts of counsellors flood markets today. Yet for each counsellor there is going to be a number of texts, old and new, which hold meaning for her or him that she or he holds steadfast and true. Speaking for myself as a counsellor, I believe such texts constitute that part of self which recognises compassion and enables acts of empathy.

If we return now to our question, what rises in the counsellor who sits with her client? I have more questions. What rises in the counsellor from her attitudes, motives, her disposition? What rises from her through her life's formation and education? These questions are going to guide the unfolding understandings that notions of attitude, disposition, historicity, and fore-structures of understanding begin to fuse as I intentionally heed and develop a conscious realisation, a more complete comprehension of being a counsellor, an actualising of human fulfilment, accepting forgiveness and grace that I find are given to me.

Chapter 7. Transcending technique

The mind that seeks the deepest intellectual fulfilment does not give itself up to every passing idea. — Santayana

Some years ago during the early stages of my inquiry, a colleague and I were invited to give a paper at a science, technology and education conference in Victoria, Canada. We were, of course, keen to have the opportunity to visit an island in the west of Canada from the island we lived in south-west Australia. How could we fit what we had been discussing for weeks into a conference that was focussing on science and technology? Some thoughts had been tugging at our minds during those weeks in relation to exploring the notion of language as technology. We had not shared these ponderings in public before. We probably would not have dared to do so if our effort was to be for an opening address when everyone is especially alert, more eager to find imperfections perhaps than in the middle of the first beautiful day when everyone is more relaxed and philosophically tolerant and welcoming. With that comfort and some courage we set out to write our abstract and then our paper that we entitled "Language as technology: reframing perspectives in an action-sensitive approach to counselling."

In this chapter I revisit our 'rough' paper as well as the experience of writing it with my colleague. It was left in rough form because life's vicissitudes required our first attention and we ran out of time to complete and submit it in time for it to be published. We did present our ideas though in the twenty minute sessions that the conference organisers had allocated presenting participants with five minutes added for our audiences' questions. We were gratified that a number of people met with us afterwards to talk about our ideas some more. Though the event seems a very long time ago we have often brought the thoughts we explored then into our ongoing conversations to this day. In this revisiting, I move from the notion of

language as technology, to a deeper understanding of language as *techne* and propose that my life experience as counsellor and a sensitive and sensate human being draws my consciousness that heeds to the human condition beyond techniques of counselling to the art of counselling and the wisdom a counsellor needs.

Language as technology

In our rough paper, we advocated, following our understandings from philosophers like Husserl, David Bohm, Taylor, and Gadamer, that language is key in making meaning out of the world in which we find ourselves, it resonates within us. By speaking from our own place in the world, we are able to speak convincingly about the lived realities of others, their search for meaning, their need to make sense of their worlds and to change them. Looking back, recapturing our stories, we can recover our own standpoints on the world and by making an effort to interpret the texts of others' life stories, listening to others' stories in whatever web of relationships they find themselves, we may be able to multiply the perspectives through which we look upon these realities; we may be able to choose ourselves anew in the light of an expanded interest, an enriched sense of reality. We can offer openings, not orders, possibilities, not prescriptions.

We took these ideas about language, listening, interpreting and multiplying perspectives into developing and interpreting a field text from the lived experience of our research, a text that I had captured in my diary notes. The diary notes were the first descriptions of my encounters with my client, Barbara. As Husserl was suggesting to us we wanted to get at the truth of what was happening by going beyond a taking-for-grantedness, bracketing—raising, questioning and putting aside assumptions so that we might clear our perceptions of bias; describing—rather than theorising; and seeking to apply no judgement—trying to hear everything before attributing significance to any one thing. We were exploring phenomenology in our reading and practice at the time, and questioning what influence phenomenology might have in our learning and practice of counselling techniques or models that we were finding supportive to our work.

Before we proceed I need to recall from Chapter 3 the way I was working with clients when I was reconstituting Barbara's story for the purposes of our paper. At

that time, I was investigating Gellatt's (1989) model of positive uncertainty. In Chapter 3, I propose that positive uncertainty is a philosophy about making decisions about the future when we do not know what the future will be. The techniques of positive uncertainty have their own language traditions. These are language traditions that allow us to think and speak of the presence of paradox and ambiguity in our lifeworlds and offer words and possibilities for making meaning that might help us to manage change in and adapting to life's circumstances using both our reason and intuition. Language is a central strategy for positive uncertainty because it is with language that we can change our minds as we go along—language is a strategy for learning as we grow up. Positive uncertainty uses coaching language to persuade us to accept the past, present and future as uncertain and to develop a positive attitude towards this uncertainty. We are coached with questions such as: What do you want? What do you know? What do you believe? And what must you do? Positive uncertainty gives us a language that helps us shape mental frames through which we see the world. As a result, the language frames can shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or a bad outcome of our actions.

The following is part of what the field text became when we began to work with the early diary notes.

Barbara was blacking out on ecstasy. She described it as 'blanking' out.

She had a crippling back injury and had a very tricky operation to fix her back so that she could walk more easily. In an unfortunate turn of events she developed an unsightly skin condition as a result of an infection she contracted while in the hospital.

She was in love with David who lived in another part of the State. The two of them would have mad weekends in Melbourne, take drugs and 'blank out' for the entire time they were together.

She began to see he was disrespectful; he sometimes abused her.

They broke up and a short while later Barbara discovered she was pregnant. She was distraught with no one to confide in apart from one not especially close girlfriend. And Barbara wanted to have the baby. She said she never thought she would want to have a baby. But she loved David.

Being Catholic only complicated things somewhat.

Barbara terminated the pregnancy and she said that was an enormous grief and upheaval for her.

Speaking her story was a woman who was taking drugs and blanking out, could hardly walk and had contracted a hideous skin disease from the hospital. She was in love with an abusive man with whom she became pregnant. She wanted to have the baby. But she ended up terminating the pregnancy even though she was Catholic and it was forbidden for her to have done this. What interested us in the field text was the 'nakedness' or 'rawness' of the language the field notes had recorded from Barbara's voice. As our eyes met across our working notes, we saw what each of us was thinking—this was a horrible story. It was evocative of emotion, despair, nothingness, and deep grief.

Yet there must have been something beckoning Barbara because she came to counselling. She had permitted herself to talk. Talking became Barbara's strategy for healing her wounds. Her deciding to terminate was "a big deal, stressful." She was creating new language terms to describe what she was wanting to do: "look out and up," "make eye contact with people she passes in the street, strangers," "make a little difference with those she knows with a nod and a smile," "walking, feeling better when I walk a lot, looking out and up, smiling at people and they have been smiling back at me."

It is a story of how the language of positive uncertainty—mental frames, plans, goals, possibility, optimism—helped Barbara develop a new world view with which she could live and form new ways of being in the world. In my meetings with her I found myself designing questions that were reminiscent of a kind of technique or technology, *tekhnnologia*, 'systematic treatment', a purport of positive uncertainty. What do you want? What do you know? What do you believe? And what must you do? The tenets of positive uncertainty must have performed some kind of magic for Barbara who truly wanted to turn towards a different and a new future.

Poignantly, Michelle de Kretser, author of the novel, *The Hamilton Case*, researches, imagines and tells the story of her main character, Sam Obeyesekere who we find amidst turmoil in Sri Lanka. She illustrates the fundamental messiness and illogic of the human condition, sensitive to the human need for story to connect ourselves to the world and make sense of our being in it.

Life is bearable only if it can be understood as a set of strategies. In the endless struggle to explain our destinies we search for cause and effect, for recurrent patterns of climax and dénouement; we need beginnings, villains,

we seek the hidden correlation between a rainy afternoon and a letter that doesn't arrive forty years later. (2003, p.311)

As our dialogue for preparing our paper continued and engaged us in acts of interpreting the language of a story captured in the field, we were uncovering strategies that Barbara was using to multiply her perspectives about her condition of being human in the world. Conscious of her new skills of talking and walking and looking into the eyes of others, Barbara was learning to communicate with others, tentatively exploring different layers of possibilities for communicating with others. We wondered whether we could speak of language as technology, as a means for discovering what it takes to live by our best lights. With Sam M. Intrator, and following Parker J. Palmer (2005), we have to believe in the worthiness of the question: How do we live our lives fully, that is, by our best lights?

Narrating a story of self-rediscovery, that of a young woman whose personal relationship with her partner turned her world upside down, and referring to language as technology, we thought we might be able to justify a proposal to the conference that one could refer to language as a technological phenomenon, a living human process of applying knowledge rationally for the purpose of fully living in the world. Could we conceive of language as a technology that might enable us to develop counter-stories? Counter-stories are like new frames or mental structures that shape anew the way we see the world. Our frames shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or a bad outcome of our actions. Framing and re-framing become strategies, giving form to processes of renewal with a kind of technology that is inseparable from the language we embody. We were on the verge of believing that language used purposefully, scientifically and authentically, to turn stories of negative uncertainty into narratives of positive uncertainty, narratives that might well, and evidently, direct us into our future with understanding and hopefulness.

*Language as **techne***

As the conference drew near we realised we were slowly submerging ourselves into deeper waters of 'pre-understandings'. We were swimming in oceans of traditions, especially seduced by the newly forming traditions that were grabbing the metaphors of our language to subliminate technology's new communication and

information revolutions in business and industry, government agencies and the media. We 'fell' for the theme of the conference. In retrospect, I suspect that it was because that in our hearts we knew something more profound was at work in our emerging understanding of language that we did not take our paper to completion. We were able to offer the conference participants only a taste of our thoughts. The thoughts that were tugging at our consciousness turned to nagging. We were experiencing persistent feelings of anxiety, of unfinished effort to understand. For some time, I left that nagging behind without being fully conscious that I had not let it go.

In a book chapter called, "The Poetics of My Identity" Theodore Sarbin, invited by editors George Yancy and Susan Hadley to contribute to *Narrative Identities: Psychologists Engaged in Self-Construction* (2005), tells us that although the notion of constructing identity is consistent with the intent of his chapter, and with its use in social science literature, he finds

... "poetics" a more apt descriptor than "construction," a word that calls up the activities of architects and carpenters. "Poetics" calls up imaginings of a person creating, shaping, and molding multidimensional stories. The use of "poetics" also reminds us that stories, in the main, are fashioned by means of spoken and written language. (Sarbin, in Yancy & Hadley, 2005, p.13)

This notion of "poetics" recalls the priestess Diotima's gift to Socrates, "In all begetting and bringing forth upon the beautiful there is a kind of making or *poiesis*" (See above Chapter 1, p.10). Barbara's story is "poetry" in the wide sense of "creating." Poetry can tell it as it is.

Ecstasy blacks her out
Blacks her out.
Back injury cripples her
In spite of her operation.
Her body all over unsightly
Suffers infection
Given to her in hospital.
In love with David
Who lives far away.
They meet for mad weekends
Drugged entirely.
He abuses her sometimes.
She opens her eyes
One day and sees
He does not respect her.

She is pregnant
With no one to tell
Well, maybe one person.
She wants the baby
An unlikely wish for her.
She loves him, her abuser.
She is Catholic.
It is complicated.
She aborts her baby.
Grief heaves within her.

To view the stories told by my clients as poetics, as aesthetic imaginings of a person creating, shaping, and moulding, as in Sarbin, the meaning of their lives invites me to comprehend that in acts of origin, of *poesis*, clients bring forth multidimensional understandings from the deeply fragmented moments of their anxiety, feelings of emptiness and non-being or from the guilt, fear or threat that stalks them. Gadamer says, “Everything that constitutes everyday speech can recur in the spoken word”. What is given in poetry is the “mysterious way the whole of the conversation is as if present” (p.470). This mysterious way that conversation takes is where I have come to see my inquiry lead me, a place where inquiry dwells within me poetically, where I inhabit language and where language inhabits me (Gadamer, 1989).

We embody the art of *poesis*. From our mother’s womb we bring ourselves into the world. *Tekhnologia* can no longer simply translate as technique or analysis or system of treatment. In our stories ripple its earliest meaning *techne*, ‘art, craft + -logia, ‘denoting a subject of study’. In *Dewey and Eros: Wisdom and Desire in the Art of Teaching*, 1997, Jim Garrison draws from the Ancients, especially Plato, who believed that the aim of all education was to educate *eros*. For Garrison, Greek vocabulary for describing the processes of an individual’s or community’s educational growth brings us closer to understanding how to assist morally good human growth, one that exhibits and enacts love, compassion, logic and wisdom. This is not a cool, scientifically linear and logical approach—not doubt, problem, data, hypothesis, test to solution. Garrison’s is different; it is “warmer interpretation of feeling, desire and the human need to deal with one’s perceived disequilibrium by engaging imaginatively and creatively to resolve the situation, thereby restoring one’s sense of equilibrium and finding satisfaction” (J.F. Soltis, in Garrison, 1997, p.xiv-xx).

Garrison focuses rather on the relationships that connect practical wisdom, practical reasoning and the education of *eros*. He returns to the Ancient Greek philosophers and John Dewey, a philosopher of the early twentieth century, and recovers and reconstructs their wisdom about the education *eros*. He takes a whole book to develop his argument “for an intimate connection among teaching, loving and logic...and the concealed connection between loving and logic that guides practical reasoning of all kinds.”(p.xvii). The Ancient Greeks offer him vocabulary to expound, extend and convince. *Eros*, is the compelling desire for good, the motivation for inquiry, the passion; *poiesis*, is the bringing of possibilities into existence, the creative process in growth; *theoria* is about proposing explanations to justify the desire; *aporia*, about the perplexity of dialectical thinking and the impossibility of resolution in achieving desires; *phronesis*, practical moral reason and wisdom; and *techne*, the art and practical skills that depend upon and are enriched through the passages of *eros*, *poiesis*, *theoria*, *aporia*, and *phronesis*.

Working with my colleague, I learned something profound about conceiving language as *techne*, as art. I learned how to honour counselling techniques and those who shared them, and transcend them. I can write Barbara’s healing self in poetic lines as if our conversation is present.

She aborts her love child
A big deal
Stressful.
She looks up and out.
In the street
She meets strangers with her eyes.
Something is different.
She nods and smiles
With those familiar.
She walks
It is better this way
When she walks
Looking up and out.
People smile back.

Barbara is ‘*The Girl in Times Square*’ of Paulina Simons’ novel (2006). Life discloses startling revelations about people she loves and forces her to confront truths that change her forever.

The jagged play of body, voice and language

Barthes never restrained his grief for his mother after she died. His grief became the substance of metaphors he used throughout his writing. Allen tells us his grief for his mother was interminable, unalloyed. Love, emotion and deep sorrow permeates his writings—he brings photograph and text together plaintively. Nancy M. Shawcross (1997) in *Roland Barthes on Photography: The Critical Tradition in Perspective* explains perhaps why Richard Avedon was Barthes' favourite portrait photographer. Avedon noted, it is all a question of recognitions, what one wants. We can find Barthes in deep contemplation of a very old and used photograph of his mother, somewhat crumpled round the edges and erratically creased. Barthes' "portrait" was his grief for his mother. "My grief," Barthes acknowledges, "wanted a just image, an image which would be both justice and accuracy-*justesse*: just an image, but a just image" (Camera Lucida, p.70 in Shawcross, 1997, p.66). His need is to convince his trusted other, his interlocutor, that his just image is connected to what is real.

I make myself cry, in order to prove to myself that my grief is not an illusion: tears are signs, not expressions. By my tears, I tell a story, I produce a myth of grief, and henceforth I adjust myself to it: I can live with it, because, by weeping, I give myself an emphatic interlocutor who receives the 'truest' of messages, that of my body, not of my speech. (Allen, 2003, p.111)

The point I make here is not about Barthes' approaches to photographic portraiture. Rather it is about images of grief that make grief real to self and other. In our grief we have an overwhelming desire to let others know the realness of our grief. Most of the time, in the ordinary times, spaces and places where we grieve, our body, our voice and our language hold and connect our grief to self and other. I wish to depict and accompany this point with a jagged play of body, voice, and language when one baby died. Later, in Chapter 10, I reflect upon the possibilities that genuine dialogue might hold for us in the fullness of the present, out of our natural desire for fulfilment.

A baby died. The haunting apparition of grief suspended or imagined manifested in the realness of body, voice and language with which parents and grandparents uttered their bewilderment.

I arrived at the hospital and was ushered into the nurse's office for a quiet conversation. A baby, having lived for forty-one weeks in her mother's womb, was stillborn. The nurse had found the baby's parents folded over, arms clutching at stomachs, wailing and then shouting hysterically, what if...? I learned that, a few days before, their obstetrician suggested that he induce the baby's birth. No, they said, we want to wait for our baby to decide when she would arrive. A day later, the baby's heart stopped beating. Her mother panicked when she could not feel her baby move and rushed frenzied to the hospital. She was too late. Her baby had died. As the nurse told me what had happened she seemed numbed by the shock of it.

I gently knocked at the door of their room and entered. The parents sat on the double bed cradling their baby. By this time they were sobbing. I sat beside them. They offered their baby to me to hold. I was to meet their baby. All three, we sat with the baby, not speaking for some time. In the quietness, she was peaceful. I felt her coldness. I noticed her blueness.

I moved to pass her back to one parent, then the other. I was to place their baby in her bassinet. As I tucked her under the blanket, her mother cried hysterically and her father sobbed and blew his nose. I offered a glass of water to the mother. She managed a few careful sips.

After some time, I wondered whether they would tell me what had happened. Haltingly, they told their story, each interrupted by the other wailing, Why did we leave it too long? Why did we not have the baby induced? And their question, what will we do about the funeral, seemed hollow. I spoke softly in answer. The mother was falling in and out of something like sleep. The father took up sobbing again. What I was witnessing was a just image of grief. I left them locked in their grief time and promised to return the next day.

The next day the mother rang to beseech me, please come in. I arrived to find the baby's grandparents with mother, father and baby. The baby lay still. Distressed, confused and angry, the grandmother was crying out, how could this have happened? I moved to the bassinet and touched the baby. I talked quietly with the grandparents while, greatly troubled, the mother and father telephoned this one and that, family and friends.

After a while I suggested I wait outside the room to give them time to be together. They asked me to stay with them. I rang a funeral director and local paper notices for them. We talked of the possibility of an autopsy, amidst wailing and tears.

I made my leave and with the grandparents travelled in the lift to the ground floor of the hospital. I left them ordering coffees at the kiosk. Ordering coffees seemed such a routine thing to do.

In the play of body, voice and language, we form a “mode of being”. Gadamer uses the term, “mode of being”. It helps us to place the transforming effect of new, different or until now unexperienced play events in the body, voice and language of our historicity. In the jagged play above, the death of a baby that was before the birth of new life for all of a family, sets a new play in the bodies, voices and language of the play partners, the real play of grief. And there is a new play for interpreting, for self-understanding, for self-transforming. The question I must ask now is, what might I imagine my part in this play to be?

Being an artist in the play of grief

Lawn guides me in saying that, “Play, as an essential aspect of art, is of great significance for Gadamer” (Lawn, 2006, p.90). Do I qualify as an artist, and if so how might I think of myself as being a counsellor as Lawn explains Gadamer’s viewpoint? If I am an actor in the play of grief, I am an artist. I am playing in a dramatic work of art. My part in the play is the counsellor who I am. If I follow Lawn as he explains what Gadamer might mean by play, I can participate in the play of grief in many metaphorical senses: “the play of light, the play of the waves, the play of gears or parts of machinery, the interplay of limbs, the play of forces, the play of gnats, even a play on words” (Gadamer in Lawn, 2006, p.91). In my thesis, I show ways I play, in an attitude of seriousness, with changing gears of technique and conversation, re-arranging parts of machine-like theory, acknowledging forces of influence on social and cultural beliefs, braving wave storms of grief, embracing what is crazy and paradoxical, welcoming lights of life force and playing etymologically with words.

This chapter is about transcending technique and theory through participating in a play of heeding consciousness that requires me to engage in a “to-and-fro movement that is not tied to any goal that would bring it to an end” (Gadamer, in Lawn, 2006, p.91). There may be shocks, surprises, and reversals of fortune that unsettle me. But my play is not random as I show it. Yet I hold no hope for a teleological endpoint (Lawn, 2006). In later chapters, it becomes evident that when I am being a counsellor participating in the play of conversation, neither is this play random: it is “purposeful and yet without some grand overarching purpose” (p.91). There is no end or finishing foreseen.

Dialogue and questioning in the play

For Gadamer, interpretive understanding of a phenomenon, and in this thesis my being as a counsellor, implies the primacy of dialogue and the structure of question and answer. That the historical text of my being a counsellor might be, in my thesis, an object of interpretation means that I must put questions to the interpreter, that is to the one who is trying to understand, interpret, and lean towards the truth of something. I must put questions to my self. For Gadamer, interpretive understanding always involves a relation to the question that is asked of the interpreter. To understand is to understand this question. A person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said in the horizon of the question. If we go back *behind* what is said, then we inevitably ask questions *beyond* what is said.

Questions can traject possibilities for grasping self-understandings that might lead to transforming the ideas and stories we make about ourselves that lie somewhere in our historical being. Gadamer suggests that by asking real questions we are testing possibilities, and a person who thinks must ask himself questions. He emphasises, "To understand the questionableness of something is already to be questioning" (p.375). As counsellor, I am to perceive the horizon of the questions and question my questions. I am to develop the art of questioning in conducting conversations with my clients.

We understand the sense of what is being said by acquiring the horizon of the question—a horizon that as such, necessarily includes other possible answers (Gadamer, 1989, pp.369-370). Such an attempt at understanding helps to perceive this chapter called "Transcending Technique" as a landscape that illustrates the horizon of questions within which the relation of language and dialogue plays.

In such a landscape, Gadamer would tell us, we do not know in advance what will come out of a dialogical conversation. Our conversation discloses understanding to us. In conversation, understanding is given to us. Following Gadamer, we can say that something was a good conversation or that it was ill-fated. A conversation has a spirit of its own—it bears its own truth within it, something emerges from it into existence (p.383). In the conversations about transcending technique, my thesis is allowing acts of heeding consciousness to merge into new horizons of understanding in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 8. Poetic consciousness

Such as are your habitual thoughts, such also will be the character of your mind; for the soul is dyed by the thoughts. —Marcus Aurelius

What makes us special as human beings is our ability to reflect on our past, present and also our future and this ability to understand lived experiences in the physical, social, personal and spiritual dimension contributes to our ability to monitor ourselves for personal bias. Reflecting can be something we do automatically and our conclusions can be mistaken: either they are so familiar and we think of them as normal, or we would rather not examine them too closely because they evoke anxiety. I believe clients are entitled to have a counsellor who has grappled with the ambiguous, perplexing and painful issues and questions that living in the world raises.

As a counsellor I have become aware of the many ways we deceive ourselves about our experience and our personal responsibility by restricting our worldview. I would like to think that counsellors are people who are willing to question their thinking about the world and their place in it. To assist in my understanding of what it is like to be a counsellor, I will myself to be curious about other people and about my motives in learning from life's mysteries. I intentionally reflect on the flow of life and my ethical ways of being in relation to my conduct, and work to become clear about what constitutes my personal worldview and what informs my values. This leads me to fine-tune my concept of my self and break through any prejudices, presumptions and fears that might interfere with my clear perception of others.

I wish to make room for all sorts of contradictory opinions, attitudes, feelings, thoughts and experiences that confront me during my inquiry. I wish to push my uncertainties forward and be willing to accept the possibilities that they might

remain uncertain and unresolved. I am ready to maintain my inquiring, to open myself continuously in my mind, body and spirit. I am uncertain and I do not have to know the answers to problems and I am ready to keep searching and learning from life experience and continue living reflectively.

The lived experiences of counsellors vary—raising families, becoming parents or stepparents, caring for dependents in close relationships, immersed in society. They experience different jobs and attend to different academic studies. Counselling might be for them a second or fifth career. They come from different social classes or have lived in another country exposed to different cross-cultural experiences. It is to be hoped that they have negotiated challenges in their personal life and are open to the magic of mysteries and possibilities in their own lives so as to facilitate this for others.

Human beings are always in relation to others as well as in relation to things, themselves and ideas. Though we might associate Sartre with nihilistic existentialism, Sartre advocated two ways to be with others, competitively or cooperatively—we can aim for dominance, we can aim to be submissive, we can withdraw. Cooperative relationships provide by contrast relationships in which we dare to put ourselves before creating something of value, where we respect each other's needs without feeling obliged to meet them (in van Deurzen, 2010).

To be with my clients is to be with them in a cooperative rather than a competitive way. My orientation is to be positive, caring and empathic as well to stand firm and face conflict alongside them.

Jaspers talks about empathy as a way of "feeling inside" another's experience (.....). Counsellors need to dare to participate in the client's experience, resonating with it as fully as they can. Though one can never enter a client's encounter with his ordeal, we can evoke images, memories and emotions to resonate with it. To have a capacity for resonance is to hone it constantly. It requires one to be fully present, co-present with another, and to take part in a therapeutic encounter as a fully engaged human being.

We would expect counsellors to know about the importance of trust and to appreciate that trust will not grow without risk and without being tested. We will have learned to judge when a situation can be judged and when it cannot. To be open and be able to tolerate uncertainty are attributes of trust. Gaining and losing

trust is action sensitive. We gain trust by consistently enacting what we promise. Mistrust comes out of our disappointment when people do not act true to their word or when certain circumstances do not meet our expectations. van Deurzen and Adams in *Skills in Existential Counselling and Psychotherapy* (2011), say that our capacity to gain trust

... reflects directly on our work as therapists because our clients trust us when they dare to risk telling us something that is important and find out it is treated with respect, interest and understanding. It creates a new sense of hope for them. The principle of trust building is the glue that maintains and deepens relationships and one's sense of belonging. (P.32)

Respecting someone's autonomy in risk-taking is to accept her actions because of her differences rather than in spite of them. The therapeutic relationship is reciprocal, not equal. Intense in their advocacy, van Deurzen and Adams go so far as to say that, without reciprocity and cooperation, one can argue that society will collapse and we will lose our individual and collective humanity and identity. Their argument is grand and it is not for this thesis to justify. It is worth noting though that van Deurzen and Adams forward it passionately as even more reason for counsellors to explore personal, social, cultural and political relationships in equal measure (van Deurzen and Adams, 2011).

Our innermost self is a forceful source for determining self-reliance and shaping our individuality. Familiarity with that self brings ease to our personal lifeworlds, earned through struggling with the worries life deals us. True self-reliance means that one suffers solitude without effort, and, in company with friends and family, one can be free from awkwardness. The closer we are to ourselves the more we are at ease in intimate relationships. We are more able to judge that some relationships will be mutually enriching and know how to make them deeper and trusting. Being autonomous does not mean being a loner, and it does not mean simply reacting against what others believe. It means freeing oneself to be part of a group without losing one's sense of self. It means being open and comfortable enough to see something as we have never seen it before (van Deurzen and Adams, 2011).

Pulled-up-short

In Gadamer's *Truth and Method* we are drawn to three basic experiences of truth: art, historical understanding and language. Gadamer says these are not to be understood as theories, that these three experiences are "encounters with truth." His intention is to rescue these experiences of truth from theorising. Historical understanding, experiencing one's place within a living tradition, and language, the truth of which is experience every day, are modes of understanding that can be reclaimed and revived when the more fundamental understanding of truth is hermeneutically, interpretively, uncovered. In genuine hermeneutic encounters, one is surprised, "pulled-up-short," in novel and unique ways. Expectations are thwarted as the taken-for-granted-ness of the everyday pattern confronts the unforeseen (Lawn, 2006). As we lean towards the truth, it reveals something to us, it discloses itself (Sokolwski, 2000).

This experience of being pulled-up-short, the sense of 'I've never looked at it this way before', seems to be what Gadamer had in mind, thinks Lawn. No matter how many times one reads a novel or a poem, new lines of enquiry and new possibilities constantly open themselves to us. The written text does not change but the interpretive possibilities, that is, for Gadamer, the truth possibilities, do, as they are endless. As we have noted Gadamer saying before in Chapter 1, page 8, in understanding the notion of truth as disclosure, the best that can be hoped for is what is opened up and brought to light, not knowledge, but insight into the possibilities and constraints of being human.

For Gadamer, experience is really a form of understanding. But understanding does not give rise to detached knowledge of this and that: experience is principally self-understanding, as understanding of the self and for the self. "Self-awareness is only a flickering in the closed circuits of historical life" (p.276). That is why the prejudices of the individual, far more than her judgements, constitute the historical reality of her being. "History," says Gadamer, "does not belong to us; we belong to it" (p.278).

Gadamer's suggestion is that although we cannot escape the co-ordinates of 'historical life' we are not the puppets of history pulled down by inherited prejudice. Of course it is not possible to get a completely unclouded perspective on our own prejudice because prejudices are part of the way we understand, they are

the pre-judgements that precede judgement. The 'flickering' suggests at least moments of self-understanding, insight and illumination (Lawn, 2006).

Tradition is part of the background to our engagement with the world. It can never be made an object of investigation as we are always within it and can never find a point outside it to test its validity. For Gadamer, language provides the speaker with a means of communication and a standpoint from which to view the world, a worldview. As we learn to use language and as we grow from within cultures of family, tribal, community or societal traditions, we acquire a certain perspective on the world, in Gadamer's work, a "horizon."

Once again, I reconstitute my diary notes and pay faithful attention to reflect the time, place and context of the narrative I develop. It seems necessary to capture the experience as it was lived, thought and spoken. Some years have passed since my meetings with Brenda. Returning thus to Brenda's story offers me some means to illuminate my understanding of the ways history and language interconnect, form and transform in events unforeseen and during moments of heeding consciousness.

Brenda and Peter's child Jane died of leukaemia. Peter suggested that Brenda attend counselling because she seemed unable to cope with everyday living.

Brenda told me that in talking with me this was the first time anybody had really listened to her. She felt that her family and friends did not want to mention Jane as they did not want to upset her.

Peter felt Brenda should be getting along a little better because he himself was coping and 'getting on with life'. Brenda was dwelling on guilt thoughts... Why her child?...She was so young...I'm still alive ... I didn't tell her I loved her before she died ... What did I do wrong?

Brenda and Peter had a son John who was twelve at the time of Jane's death. Before Jane's death their approaches to parenting were compatible. After Jane's death this changed. Peter felt that John should be able to do what he wanted. He felt that life was short and therefore did not want to restrict John's activities. Peter felt that Brenda was being over protective. Brenda felt that she had already lost one child and did not want to lose another. She felt that she could not protect Jane and now she should do everything she could to protect John.

Jane's death shook Brenda's and Peter's horizons. Her death had amplified their differences. Brenda's way of coping was quite different from Peter's. Peter's worldview was to get on with everyday living—Brenda was immersing herself in guilt. According to Peter, immersing oneself in guilt was not “getting on with life,” one copes. Brenda was perhaps indeed immersed in grief but her need was to be listened to and confront what Jane's death was to mean for their family. She had expected her family and friends to be there for her but they could not, perhaps in their own grief, say Jane's name. Brenda's was a horizon that held a perspective on family, motherhood, relationships and deeply felt emotions. Brenda and Peter's worldviews of the past were claiming more prominence in their relationship. The differences in their history and the ways they expressed their responses to Jane's death and coping, manifested in their arguing about their son, John.

In interpreting, of course, we need to question our interpreting. We cannot assume correctness in our interpreting. We will need to question experience for possible understandings. The need for interpretation is constant and ever present, says Gadamer (Lawn, 2006, p.66). In the next part of the story, I question to uncover possibilities for understanding human responses to death.

Jane was diagnosed with leukaemia only six months before she passed away. Brenda was working part-time before Jane was diagnosed but gave up work to be with Jane during treatment. Brenda did not return to work. Before, when Brenda was working part-time she was also doing all the housework, now Brenda said, “I can't even do my housework.”

What tradition was Brenda expressing in the words, “I can't even do my housework.” Was it in reference to an inherited familial tradition where women, not men, did the housework, and if they did go to work, were they still obliged to do it all? In her state of grief, was this tie too big a burden to bear? And was this why Peter seemed to cope better and get on with life, unburdened, as it were, by obligation? All of these questions could lead to possibilities for interpreting, for understanding what was going on behind the scenes. In fact, the questions must arise, from my own worldview! Coming to an understanding requires me to give ground on my prejudices, otherwise as Taylor, following Gadamer, might put it, I might engage in a sham, and end by manipulating my client's thoughts.

The end is being able in some way to function together with the partner [my client], and this means listening as well as talking, and hence may require that I redefine what I am aiming at. (Taylor, 2002, p.128)

As I entered conversation with Brenda the act of interpreting was calling me into the tasks of self-understanding and understanding the profound ethical implications of desiring a genuine conversation between counsellor and client.

In the first chapter of *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer*, “Gadamer: The Man and His Work”, Robert J. Dostal helps us see how Gadamer suggests we proceed when we find ourselves in a hermeneutical situation: we adopt a “posture”, or an attitude, that “requires one always be prepared that the other may be right.”

The ethic of this hermeneutic is an ethic of respect and trust that calls for solidarity. Gadamer himself embodies this ethic, not only in his work, but also in his life. All those who have encountered him, whether they find themselves in agreement with him or not, have found him, like the Socrates he so much admired, always ready for conversation. (Dostal, 2002, p.32)

I admire those who take us into the mind and ethics of Gadamer as much as I admire Gadamer himself. This must already be truly evident to readers of this thesis.

Before continuing with heeding consciousness of my personal and counsellor requirements for constant self-questioning and interpreting, I wish to recall the philosophical attitude we adopt when we enter a mode of consciousness about the way we contemplate experience. What I want to suggest here is that my work of understanding the ways Gadamer influences and guides me is not to develop yet another counselling technique that I then attempt to transcend it. Rather this work for me is a going beyond into something that is open and real, not controlled, in the spirit of being human and in trust and hope for humanity.

At this point I must acknowledge one of the most recently emerging approaches to counselling: philosophical counselling. John McLeod in his introduction to counselling devotes a chapter to philosophical counselling. I find McLeod’s introduction sheds some uncanny light on *Truth and Method* for its contribution to understanding discrete acts of counselling.

Unlike other therapeutic approaches, which specify certain techniques and methods that should be used, practitioners of philosophical counselling have

been "reluctant to acknowledge that they espouse any kind of well defined 'method'". (McLeod, 2003, p.278)

McLeod goes on to note that Gerd Achenbach (1995) argued that a philosophical approach to therapy is "beyond method":

If there is anything that characterizes philosophy, it is that it does not accumulate insights, knowledge or stores of truths which only wait to be called up when needed ... Philosophical reflection does not produce solutions but rather questions them all. (McLeod, 2003, p.279)

Likewise, McLeod shows Schuster's alignment when she suggests that "anything that claimed to be 'the method' of philosophical counselling would itself be open to question." Schuster, observes McLeod, describes her work as involving "a free, spontaneous developing conversation for which no method can exist" (p.279).

McLeod asks what it means that "no method can exist," or to claim to operate "beyond method?" Worldview, interpretation and dialogue might be principles for working philosophically in counselling. But, says McLeod, "to tie these practices down to a defined method would be to deny the intrinsic open-endedness and creativity of a genuinely philosophical spirit of inquiry." As an aside, it is interesting to note that McLeod reports that Achenbach and Schuster do not talk about 'clients' or 'patients' but instead use the term 'visitors', real people. "A 'visitor' is someone who joins in a convivial exchange, rather than someone who buys a service or has a 'method' applied to their 'problem'" (p.279). I like this term and wonder if I could get away with it amongst my professional colleagues. 'Sessions' would become meetings. Perhaps later on. For now, the traditions of language in counselling seem somehow generally understood by the profession, referral agencies and the public.

Brenda talked endlessly repeating her incomprehension of what had happened to her. It was some time before counselling sessions with Brenda became "free, spontaneous, developing conversation."

As Brenda was very talkative and needed to get a lot of things off her chest I focused at first upon building rapport and trust between us by fully attending to what she was telling me. About halfway through our second session I wondered if it was time to suggest a program for us to work through together. I asked Brenda what she

wanted to achieve from our counselling work. I also wanted to raise in Brenda's mind the possibility that she would know when she no longer needed counselling.

I wanted to check in with Brenda her about her grief. I was careful to reflect that each individual moves through and expresses grief and loss differently. If Brenda could appreciate in some ways that she shared her situation and feelings with others who met similar losses and adversities, I believed that I could carefully support her through the work of grief and loss.

I was quite direct in asking Brenda if she was feeling shocked by Jane's death. Was she able to believe yet that this had happened? Or was she pretending Jane had not really died? Was life for Jane still a possibility? Was Brenda feeling angry or guilty or depressed? I was hoping my questions might give Brenda a sense that my genuine interest in how she was would open her to the possibility that I would be truly listening to her and, at the same time, I could offer her themes for what she could talk to me about.

Yes, she said, she felt shocked and could hardly believe that Jane would no longer be breathing next to her. Feelings of guilt were disturbing her most of all. Peter did not share her feelings, she said. He seemed to have moved on. Had he already accepted the reality of Jane's death and the consequences for their little family? Brenda wondered.

For six months before Jane was to die Peter and Brenda knew they were going to lose Jane. Jane's leukemia was unrelenting. Brenda thought they might have come to terms with her impending loss before the loss of Jane actually occurred. As we continued to talk through sessions, Brenda was gradually discovering that "it can be normal for someone to become stuck in grief" whether or not they have time to come to terms with death before it happens. She said, "The feelings I am experiencing are normal for me. I will move along when I am ready."

For me, this was a sign of Brenda's capacity to be open to the possibility of thinking and feeling differently about Jane's death. She might no longer be stuck. She was setting her first goal towards healing because next, she said, she was going to talk with Peter and tell him that people progress through grief and loss differently, in hope of easing Peter's concerns about her progress. I was confident that both Brenda and Peter possessed good communication skills. I felt this to be a step forward that could succeed in assuring Peter, and affirm Brenda.

Accepting her feelings as normal for her, for who she was as a person, Brenda began to feel more comfortable with her grief. Consequently, we were able to move along more smoothly through Brenda's experience as we shared changes in her outlook that were occurring to her.

Brenda was used to gaining recognition within her work environment and in home entertaining. She often received praise for being able to juggle raising a family, work, and housework. During the early period of her grief, she was distressed that she could no longer enjoy her life.

We talked about the ways in which Brenda could retrieve some sense of self, and being, while she was still grieving. We acknowledged that Brenda was not going to be able to do all the things she used to do, just yet. She was used to routine and the loss of a routine could be a loss in itself. We talked about the possibility of refreshing plans for her days so Brenda could regain her sense of routine.

We explored the new parenting issues that the loss of Jane had created. Brenda agreed that we invite Peter to join us to explore their different ideas. Once Peter and Brenda acknowledged each other's thoughts and feelings about Jane's death and how this was impacting on their fears for John's welfare, they might come to terms as co-parents who could share decision-making in their parenting of John.

The meetings with Peter released the tension between Brenda and Peter that had built after Jane died. They decided that they no longer needed counselling support. Brenda was still grieving but she had more skills and resources to deal with her grief.

Were Brenda and Peter able at last to accept that each individual has her or his own worldview, that each has her or his own present and past? Could they perceive that our present, past and the way we see our future shapes the way we live our lives and our conceptions of how we should live our lives? As they cleared the way for a future together again, albeit a painfully changed one, could they articulate the tensions that might occur if their different worldviews become contradictory in crises? Could they express what each one finds problematic about the other's conceptions? Could they forgive each other's misinterpretations? Could they negotiate their ways through expectations that might not be realistic?

How might Gadamer advise them? He tells us, "It would be a mistake to say we are always locked into the past but we are ceaselessly in a present through which the past speaks" (Lawn, 2006, p.68). If as he says, we come to understand that all understanding takes place from within our "embedded horizons", our perspectives of the world we live in, our worldview, we might accept the differences we perceive in each other's horizons of understanding. In continuous dialogue, when we raise our awareness, surface and admit our prejudices, bracket our assumptions, adopt an attitude of unconditional positive regard for each other, refuse judgement, and

share the qualities of our historicity, we might understand that all our horizons are “necessarily and ubiquitously interconnected with the past” (Lawn, 2006). In dialogue, we shape new landscapes of our history together: our horizons fuse in a new horizon that still resonates with meanings from the past. In the dialogical experience there is an opportunity to encounter the possibility of truth and hope in relationship. Though as we attempt to understand self and other we still envision a future, all our “understandings in the present constantly draw upon, fuse with, the past” Gadamer refers to the refining of our self-understanding through such fusing of horizons, as “effective historical consciousness”.

Thus we are reminded of Sarbin’s “poetics” (See Chapter 7), the word Sarbin prefers for “constructing” our narrative identity. Poetics calls up a person’s effective historical consciousness to imagine, create, shape, and mould the multidimensional stories of our lives. Poetic consciousness is what we need for writing our stories. I offer this anonymous poem as a tribute to Brenda and Peter.

Each for himself gathered up
the cherished purposes of life;
its aims and ambitions;
its dearest affections;
and flung all with life itself
into the scale of battle.
(Berman, 2001, p.11)

Here I meditate upon the human historicity of the nautilus shell. The life of the ancient cephalopod, the nautilus, has inspired the arts through the ages. Through the arts, the nautilus speaks to our humanity of chaos and restlessness in its battles with Earth’s seas, the violence of change, the beauty of proportions and patterns, and our anguished longing for harmony and eternity. Like the nautilus, human beings have survived as a rare, though populous, species through eons of time. Gyorgy Doczi’s work in *The Power of Limits: Proportional Harmonies in Nature, Art and Architecture* (1981) is a fine exposition of limits and limitlessness. It is an optimistic work that details in splendid drawings, including the nautilus, the powers that shape our lives and our values that are deeply rooted in basic limiting pattern-forming processes of nature and create limitless varieties of shapes and harmonies. Gadamer illuminates opposition, constraints and possibilities; Doczi illustrates limits and limitlessness. Both ask us to be creatively attentive to unfolding the

mysteries of the human condition in the arts and nature and to aim for practical wisdom, Gadamer in solidarity, Doczi in harmony.

When we share our own limitations with the limitations of others, as we do in the golden relations of neighbours, we complement our own and others' shortcomings, creating thereby living harmony in the art of life, comparable to the harmonies created in music, dance, marble, wood and clay. It is possible to live in this way because the proportions of reciprocal sharing, nature's own golden proportions, are built into our own nature, into our bodies and minds which are, after all, part of nature. The basis pattern-forming processes of nature, which have shaped the human hand and mind, *can* continue to guide whatever the hand and mind are shaping, when the hand and mind are true to nature. (Doczi, 1981, p.141)

Returning to Gadamer now, we appreciate that "there can be no neutral position from which interrogation or understanding takes place as the site of interpretation is itself the effect of the past upon the present" (Lawn, 2006, p.68). Often what we take for granted can be redefined, changed and realigned by acts of reading and writing. Gadamer speaks here of consciousness.

Every encounter with tradition that takes place within historical consciousness involves the experience of a tension between the text and the present. (1989, p.306)

Returning to the imperative to write

Scholars of phenomenology write in a certain mode of reflection that requires a form of consciousness, a consciousness created by the act of literacy: reading and writing (van Manen, 1990). van Manen speaks of "action-sensitive understanding" as he refers to the tension between understanding and experience, reflection and action. This kind of writing is of interest for this thesis. The mindful act of writing orients itself towards notions that might help us understand significant features of our lived experience, in this thesis, the lived experience of a professional counsellor working with grief and loss.

Historically, writing as a methodological concern is usually discussed in relation to its purpose of research report writing and publication of scholarly articles. Educators like Paulo Freire have written about the formative value of reading for

the development of literacy and critical consciousness, for example *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1987) and *Education for Critical Consciousness* (2002), for example. But van Manen asserts that the connection between research and writing is surprisingly little understood, and that an exploration of both the epistemology and the pedagogy of writing shows the importance of this relationship.

At some time there comes a point when the researcher needs to communicate in writing the progress of an inquiry with some kind of 'research report'. Some human science researchers observe the tradition that the writing in and of itself is largely a reporting process, especially if the aim is to make human science methodologically rigorous, systems based, and hard. In such a tradition, says van Manen, thinking about the research itself as a poetic writing practice does not have a place. He leads us back to Barthes who says,

Some people speak of method greedily, demandingly; what they want in work is method; to them it never seems rigorous enough, formal enough. Method becomes a law ... the invariable fact is that a work which constantly proclaims its will-to-method is ultimately sterile: everything has been put into the method, nothing remains for the writing; the researcher insists that his text will be methodological, but this text never comes: no surer way to kill a piece of research and send it to join the great scrap heap of abandoned projects than Method. (1986, p.xx)

For the human sciences, and specifically for hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused into the research activity and the reflection upon it. The style of writing closely relates to the personhood, knowledge, attitude and the literary experience of the writer. Writing fixes thought on paper. It externalises what in some sense is internal; it distances us from our immediate lived involvements with the things of our world. In human science research, we seek to make reflectively understandable and intelligible some aspect of our lived world. Our imperative is to write.

"For the true writer", Barthes declared, "to write is an intransitive verb: one does not write something, one simply writes". (Culler, 2002, p.87) For Barthes, research does not just involve writing: research is the work of writing, writing is its essence.

What I write about myself is never the *last word*: the more "sincere" I am, the more interpretable I am ... my texts are disjointed, no one of them caps any

other; the latter is nothing but a *further* text, the last of the series, not the ultimate in meaning: *text upon text*, which never illuminates anything. (Culler, 2002, p.91)

From his scholarship van Manen is able to assert that, amongst researcher-writers such as Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, the researching and reflecting on the one hand are quite indistinguishable from reading and writing on the other (p.126).

For instance it is known that Sartre was a phenomenologist who led a full social and political life, and that he commented at the age of 70, "I still think but because writing has become impossible for me the real activity of thought has in some way been repressed." At age 70, writing and thinking, by his own admission, became very difficult for Sartre. His central life imperative had been to write.

The only point to my life was writing. I would write out what I had been thinking about beforehand, but the essential moment was that of writing itself. (in van Manen, 1990, p.126)

To van Manen, Sartre gave a most succinct definition of his methodology; writing was his method, what he did. For van Manen, writing is a kind of self-making or forming, "To write is to measure the depth of things, as well as come to a sense of one's own depth" (p.127). In the poem, *Divus*, that follows, the poetic writing is a method for disclosing a phenomenological study of what might be imaginatively, feelingly and metaphorically the way to healing for the mother of the child who speaks. Poetic consciousness and poetic writing become essential to measure the depth of things and reach the sense of one's own depth. *Divus* is the Latin word for a godlike, blessed memory.

I loved
the quiet time I spent
when every heart beat
you had sent
to my flesh
and to my skin
flowed forth to bring
me peace within
your silent womb,
... I loved the silent time.
And even as
my tiny heart
labored at death's call

before my start
at birth and life,
and as I ailed,
soon no longer
to inhale
or feel your pulse to mine,
... I loved the quiet time.
My body now
apart from yours,
still lives, yet not
upon your shores,
and suffers not
nor is in pain
for within
its new domain
I can love the quiet time.
... I loved the quiet time. (Berman, 2001, pp.11-12)

Poetics as surpassing method

Auchenbach would perhaps see a poetically conscious approach to counselling therapy as "beyond method." He himself uses metaphor to capture what it means to be a philosophical counsellor. The counsellor steps aboard a ship that has lost its speed and direction in dangerous waters, and sits with the captain exploring shared known territories of navigation. Only later over hot cups of coffee do they turn to conversation that drifts from seriousness to laughter and back again till it is time for the captain to return to his battle with the "unreliable sea." With this metaphor, Achenbach invites us to reflect on questions such as where is the method in all this? What is its system, its rigour? He asks,

Is the 'method' to be found in the 'intelligent talks about navigation...?' Or might we locate the method in the 'laughter and coffee during the relaxed conversations at the end'? (in McLeod, 2003, p.280)

In Part One of Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, "Experiences in a Concentration Camp", Frankl's poetic narrative contains no neutral writing or theoretical conclusions about how to "say yes to life." Indeed one could say that his poetics teach us without necessarily needing to be developed into the theoretical "Logotherapy in a nutshell," Part Two. For example, his teaching is immanent in his narrative.

At times, lightning decisions had to be made, decisions which spelled life or death. The prisoner would have preferred to let fate make the choice for him. This escape from commitment was apparent when a prisoner had to make the decision for or against an escape attempt. In those minutes in which he had to make up his mind—and it was always a question of minutes—he suffered the tortures of Hell.

We were grateful for the smallest of mercies. We were glad when there was time to delouse before going to bed, although this in itself was no pleasure, as it meant standing naked in an unheated hut where icicles hung from the ceiling.

If someone had seen our faces on the journey from Auschwitz to a Bavarian camp as we beheld the mountains of Salzburg with their summits glowing in the sunset, through the little barred windows of the prison carriage, he would never have believed that those were the faces of men who had given up all hope of life and liberty. Despite that factor - or maybe because of it - we were carried away by nature's beauty, which we had missed for so long. (Frankl, 1964) Viktor Frankl's family, his wife, father, mother, and brother died in the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. Only his sister survived. Frankl endured extreme hunger, cold, and brutality first in Auschwitz and then Dachau, and he was under constant threat of going to the gas ovens. Frankl lost every physical belonging on his first day in the camps, and was forced to surrender a scientific manuscript that he considered his life's work.

And yet despite these appalling circumstances, Frankl emerged as optimistic. His reasoning was that even in the most terrible situations, people still have the freedom to choose how they see their circumstances and create meaning out of them. In the preface of the third edition of *Man's Search for Meaning*, Gordon Allport refers to the "last freedom". The evil of torture is not so much the physical torment, but the active attempt to extinguish freedom.

A favourite quote of Frankl's was from Nietzsche, "He who has a why to live can bear with almost anything". Frankl's recollections of the thoughts that gave him the will to live are poignant. Mental images of his wife provided the only light in the dark days of the concentration camp, and there is a beautiful scene when he is thinking of her with such intensity that when a bird sits on top of a mound in front of him, it appears to be her living embodiment. He also imagined himself after liberation in lecture halls, telling his story, and he eventually came to write down notes remembered from his lost manuscript.

The men who had given up in contrast smoked their last cigarettes, which could otherwise have been traded for a scrap of food. These men had decided that life

held nothing for them and Frankl saw this thinking as a terrible mistake. Frankl maintained that we must find the courage to ask what life expects of us, day by day, and that our task is not merely to survive, but to find the guiding truth specific to us and our situation, which can sometimes only be revealed in the worst suffering. Frankl says that "rather than being a symptom of neurosis, suffering may well be a human achievement."

What is amazing about Frankl's experiences is that they caused him to live out the ideas about which he'd been theorising before the outbreak of the Second World War. Frankl's theory and practice became known as "logotherapy" that sees the prime motivating force in human beings as a "will to meaning."

Frankl tells the story of an American diplomat coming to his office in Vienna. The man had spent five years in psychoanalysis. Discontented with his job and uncomfortable about implementing US foreign policy, this man's analyst had laid the blame on the relationship he had with his father: The United States Government represented the father image and was therefore the superficial object of his angst, but the real issue was his feelings towards his biological father. Frankl, however, simply diagnosed a lack of purpose in the man's work and suggested a career change. The diplomat took his advice and never looked back.

This anecdote highlights that existential distress is a sign that we are becoming more human in our desire for meaning and that the outstanding feature of human beings is our free will.

Frankl maintained that we can never predict the behaviour of an individual and can make few generalisations about what it means to be human. For example, the hunger, torture and filth did serve to desensitise the prisoners, but despite being herded as animals, many somehow avoided a mob mentality.

Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know man as he really is.
After all, man is that being who invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz;
however, he is also that being who entered those gas chambers upright, with
the Lord's Prayer or the Shema Yisrael on his lips. (1964)

For Frankl, what makes humans different as a species is that we can live for ideals and values. Personal responsibility guides the decisions we make in our everyday lives. No matter what the circumstances, we can be free.

The vitality of courage

Dylan Thomas's call to rage and rage against the dying light of life resounds as a call to rage in order to live, to breathe fire, to breathe courage.

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

(Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems, 1934-1952*, 1978 edition, p.159)

Paul Tillich talks of the *courage to be* and uses it as his book title (1952). Paul Kurtz takes the idea of the courage to be and adds *the courage to become* (1997). With the same acknowledgement, Rollo May formulates his title, *The Courage to Create* (1994). All three affirm courage as the essence of being human. Tillich affirms the courage to persist in surviving great suffering and anxiety in the face of nonbeing and death. Kurtz affirms that our task is not only to survive: we are to forge our own realities. May, referring to the radical changes of the late twentieth century, that still continue to shake the foundations of our traditions, values and beliefs in 2013, proposes quite vehemently that we "seize the courage necessary to preserve our sensitivity, awareness, and responsibility in the face of radical change", take the

courage to leap into the unknown of the future and do something new (1994, p.12).

Here I am not concerned with whether theist—Tillich was a theologian, Kurtz opposed theist reasoning for justifying courage as a virtue— or secular writings about courage give us comfort or guidance, one more than another. I am concerned rather to meditate on courage as an essence of being human and as affirmative expression of the human spirit. May situates courage in the centredness of our own being. Without courage we would feel ourselves to be a vacuum (May, p.13). The word courage, May informs us,

comes from the same stem as the French word *coeur*, meaning "heart." Thus just as one's heart, by pumping blood to one's arms, legs, and brain enables all the other physical organs to function, so courage makes possible all the psychological virtues. Without courage other values wither away into mere facsimiles of virtue. (1994, p.13)

For Kurtz (1997), courage stimulates the will to live, the spring of motivation, the spark of inventiveness and the drive to achieve our goals, whatever they are—pursuing a love partner, amassing a fortune, winning a ball game, completing a novel, engaging in humanitarian efforts to help others. (Kurtz, 1997, p.22)

In this thesis, I embrace courage as the strength and will to face adversity full-on, to confront death and loss, to weep, to wail, to question, to be depressed, to face life again with renewed hope and resilience. Courage requires us as counsellor and client to delve each into our own historical past, uncover and surface our traditions, bring them into language, and understand from the past what possibilities might be projected to help formulate future realities in our continuing experience of living human beings. Kurtz's perception of our task is poetic.

The constant task of the human spirit is to overcome the desire to escape into another world, to continue to live in spite of adversity, to withstand the tides of fortune, to express creative acts, and to redirect our efforts in the future. This requires the expression of the courage to both persevere and to become; and what we choose to be, or where we will live, or what we will do tomorrow, the next year, or the next decade depends upon our determination and resolve. Accordingly, the *vitality of courage* is the stimulus and motivation which enables us to fulfill our interests, desires, and values, whatever they are. We have the power to be and to become, and the key question is whether we are. (Kurtz, 1997, p.23)

Chapter 9. Consciousness and historicity

In historical consciousness I become aware of myself in communication with other historical selves; I am, as a self, bound to time -- to the flow of my own unique situations and events. —Karl Jaspers

After World War II, Gadamer was invited to take Jasper's Chair at the University of Heidelberg when Jasper left for Basel in Switzerland. Dostal, in *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (2002), tells us that in his *Philosophical Memoirs*, Gadamer wrote more about philosophers he knew well than about himself. Jaspers was amongst them (2002, p.28). This point of history might explain why I have come to see some resonance between Gadamer and Jaspers as I follow the call of my inquiry to bring their thoughts, from their parallel times of philosophical investigations, into the philosophical, existential and practical understanding of my capacity to contribute to the lives of others through counselling. In this chapter, among other philosophers, and as I explore ways of developing deeply effective historical consciousness in my practice, Gadamer and Jaspers speak to me most clearly about our shared human need to understand that human beings are historical beings.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the sciences theorised about human beings as if they were objects, and it was, as if, philosophers too were to think about human beings with similar, detached, objective investigations. In his editorial of Jaspers' *Philosophy of Existence*, John R. Silber introduces us to Jaspers' counterpoint,

Existentialism is a reaction against pseudoscientific philosophising, and the term "existential" (*Existenz*) focuses this reaction by calling our attention to the concrete human situation from which philosophical thought arises. (in Jaspers, 1971, p.vii)

In his article, "The Basic Concepts of Jaspers' Philosophy" in *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, edited by P.A.Schilpp, Kurt Hoffman suggests that, according to Jaspers, philosophy must be concerned with man in his concrete physical, historical, social, and personal situation. It cannot or should not reduce human existence to one or even several of its dimensions. For Jaspers, every human being is an exclusively historical human being, unique and concrete, finite and temporal. (Hoffman in Schilpp, 1957, p.102)

Taylor, in the first paragraphs of his article on Gadamer and the human sciences (2002), enunciates Gadamer's tremendous contribution to twentieth century thought. Gadamer proposed a new and different model of philosophical thought that promises to carry us beyond the malaises of our time such as individualism, ethnocentrism, primacy of intellectual reason, patriarchal domination of the world's communication media, violence and crime, and obsessive consumerism. Human and social science once rested upon the scientific ideas of objectivity. For Gadamer, our greatest challenge of the new century is to understand one another with real cultural openness to the fundamental conceptual differences between cultures world-wide (Taylor, 2002, p.126).

Both Jaspers and Gadamer lead us to understandings of texts or events that come to us out of our history, not on a model of science but rather on speech-partners engaged in dialogue to come to shared understandings of our multiple histories. It is not simply knowledge of our own past that needs to be understood through dialogue and conversation, but knowledge of the other's past. Gadamer calls this historical consciousness. There is more to it though, as Georgia Warnke suggests in her article, "Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Politics" (2002). One presumes to understand the past in the same ways as others of our culture do. It is possible to unconsciously substitute a new presumption for the one that dominated before. If so, one ignores the temporality and the historical distance that separates one from the past,

...from Gadamer's point of view, one ignores the wealth of historical events, associations, and relationships that have affected its meaning. The result is that once again, one allows one's own prejudices to prevail unchecked—in this instance, not because one remains wedded to one's own projects and ideas without recognising their thickness or historicity but rather because one

simply takes one's thick prejudices for the original meaning of the text itself.
(Warnke, 2002, p.92)

The ruling concepts of prejudice

Our prejudices can become ruling concepts with which we constitute our lives. It is my hunch that these prejudices become so fixed in us that they become aporetic, that is, they perplex us and we cannot seem to get beyond their impasse until we bring them to the surface of our historical consciousness in our conversations and storytelling. It might be habitude that makes us think that prejudices are bad—which might be a prejudice itself—because if we say a person is prejudiced it comes over as a negative judgement. But the story I am about to share suggests that once we find, recognise and give expression to the ruling concepts of our prejudices, we free our understanding to have an emancipative effect on our well-being.

My friend Harriet has been troubled all her life by the love she holds for her brother David and we have puzzled over this in many conversations over the years. Harriet is sixty-five years old now and her brother is seventy-one. In our most recent conversation, she told a story that has recurred persistently in the tales she tells about her childhood. The same story was one she used for remembering how cold the water was in the village swimming pool, her fascination with the fountain at the shallow end, and the memory she had of sitting on the edge of the pool splashing her feet in the water—the landscape of her story. She used the story she had inscribed in the labyrinth of her mind to explain why for decades she was unable through fear to put her head under water and could not swim like her dolphin-daughter.

Her brother would incessantly tease her. When he swam past her with his friends he would push her head under the water and hold her down. When she complained to her mother, her mother would tell her that was his way of expressing his love and affection for her, funny as it might have seemed. There was another aspect to her swimming. Her mother had wondered why Harriet had not made it in swimming. She often basked in a story she would tell of Harriet. Harriet had actually taught herself to swim! At only five years old she had fallen into the

swimming pool from the edge and swum under the water with the right strokes for three yards till she made it to the steps and could climb out.

Whilst almost fondly retelling this story to me, Harriet began laughing hysterically. When she composed herself she offered a most serious insight. She had not fallen in. Her brother had pushed her. She would never have fallen in because she knew she was a cautious intelligent child, she would have sat firmly on the edge and taken extra care not to fall in. A ruling concept of her prejudices, love of a brother, was shaken. Her brother was a bully. She had covered up this reality by loving her brother through her life no matter what. In a nimble and loving evasion, she had covered her bad feelings of resentment for him because it seemed better to say that he was only teasing her and his holding her under the water only made her afraid not angry. Freeing herself to re-interrogate and re-interpret the tradition and habit of her prejudice had given her permission to see the reality of the way her brother treated her. Harriet told me she had always wanted David to love her and was never sure even when he has told her in his senior years how much he loves her. She carried this burden till the moment she heeded consciousness of her prejudice.

It is possible that Harriet and I would agree that she had moved beyond *aporia*, she had released the perplexity about her relationship with David. Thus the shape of our historical consciousness transforms the traditions we inherit, assume, believe, preconceive, pre-suppose as we tread through the crossroads of our lives. As Warnke interprets Gadamer,

What Gadamer sees as a genuine understanding of the past requires a similar dialogic openness to it, an openness that he says requires approaching it “in such a way that it has something to say to me” (1989, p.361). Historical consciousness assumes that what the past has to say to us, we already know better. The point of a genuinely hermeneutic relation to the past is our openness to its difference or autonomy from what we already believe and our willingness to be addressed by it. (2002, p. 93)

Between counsellor and client, we might find ourselves at different crossings. Communication across our traditions is not easy though. Somehow we believe, because we have chosen to be counsellors, that in principle we should be able to establish meaningful points of contact with our clients through inquiring into their traditions from within our own. My inquiry so far reveals that still as counsellors

we must attend to a shared inquiry both ways with our clients and all the ethical possibilities and constraints that would involve. Our traditions may very well occupy different places at different points in time. The historicity of our traditions might limit our knowledge of one another, but it does not preclude the possibility. Commenting in his article, "Getting it Right: Relativism, Realism, and Truth", Brice Wachterhauser assures us of Gadamer's optimistic openness.

The grip of tradition is not a stranglehold; it places a real limit on the completeness of our knowledge, but it allows for real knowledge of ourselves, of others, and of the world. (Wachterhauser, 2002, p. 65)

Époché as ethical, effective historical consciousness

As I have discussed before in Chapter 5, "Slipping through modalities," the term *époché* represents a modality familiar in the language, tradition and experience of phenomenologists. I wish to use this term again at this point. I have come to believe that inquiring into the historicity of others requires an ethics of *époché*. Sokolowski's explanation of the use of *époché* is worth considering. According to Sokolowski,

...*époché* is a term taken from Greek scepticism where it signifies the restraint the Sceptics said we should have toward our judgements about things: they said we should refrain from judging until the evidence is clear. Although phenomenology takes this term from Greek scepticism the sceptical overtone of the term is not kept. (2000, p. 49)

Époché is about ethical, right restraint and requires us to suspend our beliefs, to bracket them as if placing them in parentheses. *Époché* itself requires attention, suspension of judgement, description of the event, place and time, surfacing assumptions, bracketing them, and verifying them with evidence. With this quality of restraint a counsellor engages with the traditions of others in their place, time and experience. In this stage of my counselling life, I would like to think that I embrace this quality every day. I enter the lives of others with a conscious attitude of attention to their historicity.

Last April, I made pilgrimage on the Pyrenean Camino de Santiago route with my girlfriend, Steph. It was a transforming adventure for me. I still carry the spirit of the Camino with me. One treasured and enduring meeting was with Lukas, twenty-eight years old, from Germany. Lukas walked through grief and I walked

with him. Afterwards, I was often to return to this meeting in moments of contemplation and heeding consciousness. On the Camino, as a pilgrim I was able to divest myself of the identity I left behind in Hobart. My human frailty, my vow of asperity, and my sense of being a tiny spec in a gigantic landscape of snow covered mountains, rolling hills and pastures, beaten by gale force winds, driving rain, and freezing hail through endless tracks towards Santiago, magnified for me the finitude of being human and the infinitude of the universe. In paradox, walking together towards the same purpose and destination, there developed simple solidarity amongst my fellow pilgrims. In our finitude and vulnerability, traditions of language brought us together. According to Gadamer, a fundamental truth about our finitude is that it is linguistically constituted. Wachterhauser recalls from Gadamer,

“We are always already biased in our thinking and our knowing by our linguistic interpretation of the world. To grow into this linguistic interpretation means to grow up in the world. To this extent, language is the real mark of our finitude. It is always out beyond us.” Language is always out beyond us in the sense that its influence over us far extends the limits of our awareness of its influence. (Wachterhauser, 2002, p. 65)

Language brought Lukas to me. Language constituted Lukas’ historicity and mine. Along the tracks we saw into each other’s different traditions as we talked without ever having met each other before. In some intuitive way, *époché*, the place and time where we suspended judgement, was the Camino. I mediate here on some notes from my travel journal.

We met Lukas at a hostel where he joined our table one evening for dinner. He liked schnapps and we drank schnapps together with much talk and laughter. The next day Lukas set off with us. He asked to talk with us to improve his English. There followed days of walking and talking and laughing, with other pilgrims joining in with us along the way using a kind of Camino *sabir*. We were full of good cheer.

One morning when we paused to shelter from a rainstorm, Lukas asked me if I worked in Hobart. It felt easy to explain to him my counselling work with people in the despair of grief and loss, and the kinds of issues and challenges that brought people to me. When he responded, Lukas said that he might tell me about why he was walking the Camino. Only if you don’t get sad, he said. Yes, if that is what you want to do, I encouraged him. A day later Lukas told me the story of how his Sigi, his beautiful partner of ten years, was killed in a car accident on Christmas Day, just past. He had

talked with Sigi on the phone and suggested she stay at her Dad's home until the next morning rather than drive back to be with him. An hour or so later Sigi's father called to tell him Sigi and her brother were both dead.

As we walked, he wept, and when we stopped, he cried a little longer. He spoke of his initial shock and numbness, the weight of dread and then pain when he viewed Sigi's body, the angst of her funeral, moving Sigi's belongings with her mother from the apartment she shared with Lukas, moving back to live with his parents and returning to work. He was totally bereft and lifeless.

Lukas' quest for some peace or ease was why he was walking the Camino. As we walked and talked over days I learned about Lukas' life with Sigi—small details like what they loved to eat for dinner as well as their hopes and dreams. They were going to marry that year and start a family.

There are many hours in a day of walking. Every so often, I would suggest to Lukas that we stop talking and walk with our own thoughts, or that we wonder about what we might like to eat for lunch.

We talked about what ifs, and I listened as Lukas talked about some notion of bargaining for Sigi's life and we talked about notions of God, of why this terrible thing had happened. What of Sigi's brother, and her parents, family and friends? How were people managing, and what had people said or done that was in any way helpful or not? A group of young people, including Sigi's brother's girlfriend, were to get together for conversation and support when Lukas returned from the Camino.

What an incredible honour it was to meet Lukas, to talk and walk with him. It was a random happening that we met on the Camino in the first place. It was just lucky that we were on same path and boarded in the same hostel. And in this sense of things, that my birthday was same day as Sigi's death gave us some moments for contemplating the mysteries of human lives.

In one city on the Camino I attended a mass and the young priest from Boston urged us to look for the magic in every day. It was a beautiful presentation. I told Lukas about this as we walked along. When he writes to me by email he often refers to looking for magic as a gem of wisdom that helps him manage the pain of losing Sigi.

Hoffman explains that the concept of historicity in the philosophy of Jaspers “denotes a certain fullness and sumptuousness of concrete being, which is unique, incomparable, and irreducible to a conceptual scheme” (in Schlipps, 1957, p.103). In this thesis, I have been exploring how we might transcend technique and theory in counselling. Heeding historical consciousness is an act of such transcendence. There is no conceptual theme with which to analyse or interpret the Camino story.

For Jaspers, historicity attaches at the outset to individual existence. If we use Jaspers' concept, we can see that it becomes applicable to the reality of concreteness and temporality of individual situations and conditions, such as Lukas' reality. Our stories are records of history. History, Jaspers says, records the passing of events in time. History is

the condition of historicity, insofar as it is the prerequisite for a historical consciousness, which can yet reach beyond history. (In Schlipps, 1957, p. 102)

Story, history, historical consciousness cannot help but be central to acts of counselling. They enfold for every individual one's fore-understandings that shape the ways we look at the world and determine what and how we see and interpret *in* the world.

Concreteness, transcendence and historical consciousness

By the ways of an ethics of counselling that adopts a philosophy of transcendence and pursues the quest for understanding of self and others through heeding consciousness, I become aware of the ways we humans habitually distort our ways of looking and interpreting. Retrospectively, I wonder about my friend Steph's response to my walking with Lukas. At first Lukas was telling both Steph and I the facts of Sigi's death. It did not seem then that his story was private or confidential. He had begun to tell the story because I had said I would not become sad. His bargain was with me. His story did appear to upset Steph though. She did not seal a bargain. She walked ahead. She left us to it. Was she imagining that there was a private conversation between Lukas and me, or was it real? Was she imagining that we were excluding her, or were we really? In spite of our long-term friendship and avowed entrustment of each other, was Steph feeling that she had lost her travelling companion to the great grief of another? Was Steph's interpreting from her traditions of prejudice towards a threesome relationship distorting her interpretations of what was really happening? I feel I will never know the answers to these questions but I recognise their poignancy in this discussion of historical consciousness.

Might efforts to transcend distortions of interpretation with open-mindedness be a way to discover alternative possibilities for interpreting reality in situations like

Steph's? In a philosophical attitude might we become more aware of the way we interpret the world in narrow and often unrealistic ways? Does listening with the right sort of openness and attentiveness forge the transcendent energy for all good counselling practice? Can we describe the task of counselling as facilitating the client to become freer to choose when to be open and when not to be open? Does openness to experience mean one would be able to embrace autonomy truly and fully for counsellor as well as for client?

Ultimate situations

"We are always in situations," says Jaspers. Some situations change. Other situations are essentially the same—death, chance, guilt and the uncertainty of the world. Jaspers refers to these fundamental experiences of living in the world as 'ultimate situations' (1966, p.19-22). We cannot evade or change ultimate situations.

Death marks our human finitude. Death is the last signpost of our life's journey. It is our ultimate destination. According to Jaspers, death and suffering are ultimate situations to which we are exposed without any effort on our part. Does Jaspers mean that death and suffering disclose themselves to us, so to speak, 'out of the blue'? What is our task as human beings as we respond to what is given to us? For Jaspers, our response gives rise to ultimate situations. The vignettes that follow were collected by Graeme Clark in *To the Edge of Existence: Living through Grief*, retrieved 5/9/12, and illustrate ultimate situations for those suffering grief after death.

—I remember using the very last of our peanut butter. Living in my new apartment, alone and on my own, finishing the last little bit of peanut butter which had been ours, I was completely caught off guard by the devastation. Our life together was there, in that everyday peanut butter jar...our early morning breakfasts, struggling off to work, the shared hardships of many years. In the emptiness of the jar, our life together was drawing to a painful, wrenching close. The pain of giving in to the emptiness of the jar wrenched in my chest, tearing my heart and taking my breath away. I wept, overcome with the finality of sharing no more. (p.4 of 15)

—One week after Priscilla's death I was in her room throwing away all her personal possessions. I wish someone then had stopped me! I felt that if I rid my life of her personal belongings, I could go on and finish my grieving in an orderly fashion. I had heard of families creating "monuments" for their children and I was determined

not to allow that to happen to us...My God! How stupid can one person be! I literally threw away all my memories! I had no idea how important those little things would become in the months ahead... (p.5 of 15)

—I still see in my mind the picture of my wife with her oxygen mask on, struggling to stay alive. It's like it is burned into my head, a picture that is there constantly. I can block it out at times but it just keeps popping up. I realise now it is part of the unfinished business, and there is no way I can erase that. (P.135)

Whilst death and suffering are given, there are other ultimate situations that we actively or inevitably give rise to in the ways we respond to life's suffering and struggles. Those are ultimate situations of our historicity that form the substance of the task of counsellors. Barthes speaks of anxiety as an illumination of particular ultimate situations that confront everyone.

Anxiety has its own historicity. Barthes is playfully serious about it.

If there is such a figure as 'Anxiety', it is because the subject sometimes exclaims (without any concern for the clinical sense of the word): 'Je suis angoissé' (I am having an anxiety attack!) '*Angoscia!*' Callas sings somewhere. The figure is a kind of operatic aria; just as this aria is identified, memorised and manipulated through its *incipit* ('When I am laid', '*Pleurez, mes yeux*', '*Lucevan le stelle*', '*Sigingerò la mia sorte*'), so the figure takes its departure from a turn of phrase, a kind of verse, refrain or cantillation, which articulates it in the darkness. (In Culler, 2002, p.94)

We might say that our songs of anxiety arise from the fore-understandings that we embed in our historicity through singing in repetition and refrain, and in chorus with those around us, turns of phrase, verses, beliefs, preconceptions, bias, and assumptions that arise from sedimented layers of prejudice in our historicity. So deep, so painful, it might be anxiety that most powerfully brings us into the presence of our own existence and suffering so fully and so insistently. It might be anxiety that most forcefully reminds us all day, every day, to recall that we exist as human beings. In existential consciousness, in some way or another, we think of ourselves as historical beings.

Might anxiety amplify and become the greatest force that pushes us up from our past to ultimate situations of denial, bargaining, suffering, pain, guilt, despair, or acceptance in our experience of grief? If so, I ask myself, might human anxiety be the core, historical substance of the relationships I form with my clients?

Reflexivity given in consciousness

In the in-between-ness of questioning the intimate relationship that I am discovering between the consciousness and historicity of my being as counsellor, how am I to conduct myself anew as a counsellor? So far heeding consciousness during my phenomenological inquiry of the lived experience of counselling, I have searched my capacity for philosophical consciousness and poetic consciousness. Now I inquire whether I can verify my capacity for effective historic understanding. Gadamer, when he questions how knowledge and effect belong together, he finds historically effected consciousness to be something other than inquiry, "It is, rather," he says, "a consciousness of the work itself, and hence itself has an effect." I am compelled to follow his question, "But what sort of consciousness is this?" and try to account for the ways I might understand and operate with historically effective consciousness in my being and acting as a counsellor (1989, p.341).

What characterises the consciousness with which I operate in the growing *phronesis*, in the practical moral wisdom, I am coming to perceive now in my counselling self? Although historically effected consciousness belongs to the effect, Gadamer says, "what is essential to it as consciousness is that it can rise above that of which it is conscious (p.341)." The most practical way I find myself able to pursue the questions that arise here is to place my reflection in the philosophically conscious, transcendental attitude that phenomenological inquiry requires for understanding, that is, interpreting, lived experience. So I place myself in this attitude and describe reflexively my living experience of being a counsellor, I reflect what I do, how I do it, why I do it, and what I think of it. In what follows, my reader will find, simply, a series of interconnected and descriptive reflections, arranged in poetic form and this completes the chapter.

I practise silence.
I refrain from judging.
Bad assumptions
unknown assumptions
unexamined assumptions
restrict me.

There lies paradox.
To escape my assumptions

is not to make sense of my world.
I need assumptions.
My client-partner needs assumptions.
We have to know what to do with them.
I bracket them to protect
myself from the risk
that they might overshadow my partner's.

To spot them
I muzzle curiosity.
I refrain from disclosing aspects of myself
from attributing cause and
from analysing the notion of assumptions
and techniques that might bring them to light.
I am always conscious of something.
And I am conscious of the world
relating to it and
making meaning out of it.
I am an observer.
Not just though
I am a participant.
My view of a relationship
with another human being
I concede
is different to another's.

I see things as if for the first time.
Mine is only one vantage point among many.
Attending, noticing, describing
not explaining not pre-judging
is my way.

I need metaphorical holds
to brace my assumptions
because I know I can
never fully excise them
though there is reason in trying
to separate them
from habitual ways
of observing and interpreting the world.

I discipline myself to return
to the realities of the present
from the traditions of the past.
Intuitively I reach out
to grasp what is real
to snatch moments of truth.

I urge my partner
to speak describing
not explaining.
When my partner knows
no more than she can tell
we map the horizons of our knowledge
familiar to us both
what we have in common belief
situations and stories
or not.
We become wholly present to one another.

Discovering the depths of the present
We find our histories
recollecting from our past
realms of possibilities
from which the future is coming.
Our vision of the future
becomes the reality of our present.

The experience of writing this poem is transcendent and authentic for me. Jaspers explains for me. "Only through historicity do I become aware of the authentic being of transcendence -- and only through transcendence does our ephemeral existence acquire historic substance" (1971, p.74).

Chapter 10. Holding in cupped hands

We of the present are never satisfied by the world of time...transience everywhere plunges into the depths of being...it is our task to print this temporal, perishable earth so painfully, passionately and deeply into ourselves, that its essence is resurrected again, invisibly, within us...the Elegies show this, the work of endlessly converting the visible, tangible world we love into the invisible vibrations and tremors of our own nature... — Rainier Maria Rilke

She phoned me at 9pm the day after her last amniocentesis and said her babies were not moving. I met her at the hospital. Her sons had died. Immediately her reaction was, Oh, my God, this cannot be ... my life will never be the same ... how can I go on? 'Take the babies now ... don't make me go through labour ... I can't go home. With convulsive tremors, she wailed in despair. I could only be simply present to her. She cried with her husband ...planned for the next day. She delivered her twin sons and held them for hours. Though filled with sorrow, she seemed at peace. She talked and clutched her memento box in which lay her sons' pictures. She planted morning glory seeds at their graveside. (Berman, 2001, pp.xvii-xix)

This thesis is concerned with how our being discloses its self to our self and how the being-self of others discloses itself to us. It is not so concerned with the choices we make to disclose to others what parts of information about our lives we ought or feel obliged to share with others. Sokolowski (2008) often pairs phenomenology with philosophy: the intentionality of phenomenological inquiry is to come to a philosophical, transcendent consciousness of a relationship with the object of inquiry—in this thesis, the object of such inquiry is my subjective self.

Philosophy is a scientific effort, but is different from mathematics and the natural and social sciences; it is concerned not with a particular region of

being, but with truthfulness as such: with the human conversation, the human attempt to disclose the way things are, and the human ability to act in accordance with the nature of things; ultimately, it is concerned with being as it manifests itself to us. (1.2096)

In the sense of *doxa*, in counselling texts, “self-disclosure” poses us a problem: When should we disclose something of our selves to our clients, and ought we? This problem raises many ethical dilemmas discussed in circles of therapists and counsellors, and might even become the substance of legal action at its unethical worst. In the sense of *paradoxa*, in a phenomenological or philosophical attitude towards counselling, such dilemmas about self-disclosure are irrelevant. They are irrelevant because in phenomenology and philosophy we must be concerned with the *ethos* of truthfulness, with self-being as it discloses itself to us. Sokolowski asserts that “ ‘being’ is not just ‘thing-like’ ”—not as we might treat pieces of information out of our historical lives—“being involves disclosure or truth, and phenomenology looks at being primarily under its rubric [being’s rubric] of being truthful (1.889).”

Sokolowski gives reason for why my inquiry has been, and can only be, a leaning towards the truth of receiving what my being-self gives to me, heeding consciousness of how I might understand what is dative to me, and how I might therefore consciously act from within the conscious relationship I have with my being-self as a counsellor. This last chapter brings me to the ultimate situation of finding that what my inquiry discloses to my being is the primacy of my being-self in genuine human conversation.

In the mosaics of my inquiry, my meetings with clients become conversations with speech-partners—or friends, as Schuster suggests. Metaphors for describing and interpreting grief usurp theories of foreshadowed stages of how a person might understand it. Headings in my diary records lose their diagnostic prescriptions and become poetic.

Loss and grief intertwine
loss that shatters
empties
isolates

loss that dreams
loss that bears responsibility
strips us naked

demands we come back to ourselves

loss that connects us with death
tells us who we are
makes us bitter
sweetens
imprisons
frees
Loss that gives itself to us.

Things do appear to us

My inquiry convinces me, and I hope my readers, of Sokolowski's reasoning that brings us to see that things are truly disclosed, things do appear to us (l.167). And "we have to submit to the way things disclose themselves" (l.1258), that is, in their truthfulness. Genuine understanding of the possibilities that appear to us from the sideshadows of the past occurs through dialogic openness to it. Genuine understanding of one another requires us to adopt consciously an attitude of openness and reflexivity towards our historicity so that we hear what it has to say to us (Gadamer, 1989, p.361).

Coming to the understandings I have unfolded requires me to give some ground in my traditions of counselling. If I was to maintain control of a counselling session or exert influence over which stages of grief a person was experiencing, I would be engaging in a sham, possibly designed to manipulate my client while I pretended to negotiate. I am grateful for heeding consciousness of what has disclosed itself to me in truthfulness. Listening as well as talking, being conscious of consciousness, I redesign what I aim for today in my counselling, that is, genuine conversation.

*In the **ethos** of sincere conversation*

My inquiry shows me that, from the sideshadows of possibilities, counsellor and client can work together in harmony. I see that it can never be a possibility that I as counsellor could resolve a client's pain and suffering in the ways of Worden's notion of successful resolution of grief. As conversation partners, counsellor and client, we choose to lean together into the discomfort of the work and we let ourselves be seen to each other. We make ourselves vulnerable to each other and depend upon the trust and respect we gain in our presence with each other. We

cleave numbness with words, certainty with uncertainty, pretence with honesty, perfection with reason, shame with honour, and grief with love and gratitude. I am enough, I say. I am enough, says my client.

In such conversation, Doczi might suggest to us that we enter the realm of “the golden relation of neighbours” (1981, p.141). In that golden relation we share and complement each other’s limitations and shortcomings and it becomes possible for us each to see light in living the art of life. Doczi convinces us in his *Power of Limits* that the basic pattern-forming processes of nature have shaped the human hand and mind and guide whatever the hand and mind are shaping, when the hand and mind are true to nature. Thus, he says, the best human creations are ageless and even holy like a freshly opened flower (p.141). For counsellor and client, conversation partners, the “golden” conversation must be amongst the best of human creations. With two pebbles, Doczi creates a vision in motion that could describe the pattern-forming processes of a sincere conversation.

The power of limits is the force behind creation. When two pebbles are dropped into the water some distance from each other, circular patterns of the parent waves join to create ellipses that grow wider and wider, until ... they also become circles. Meanwhile, the first circles are becoming transformed: from closed circles, centred upon themselves, they are growing into parabolic arches, reaching out beyond themselves towards the infinite.
(p.141)

As Doczi then asks his incisive question, “Is this merely a pattern of pebbles, of vibration, or is it also a metaphor for love, for the power of shared limits and for the creative act itself?” I am to ask: Is sincere conversation merely a patterning of turns taken, or vibrating energy, or a creative act of love? Thus, I come to see my design for counselling as creative, fashioned with love and reason.

Human hands that shape

In *The Fountain of Joy: A Line-by-Line Commentary on Rilke’s Duino Elegies* (2009), A. S. Kline gives us permission to freely reproduce and transmit his words for non-commercial purposes. Kline cites the introductory quote for this chapter from one of Rainier Maria Rilke’s letters to his translator Witold Hulewicz in 1925. Rilke’s concept of the temple within is embodied in the words above. In the temple, there is both lament and joy. His fidelity to inner life and to re-creating and transforming

the outer world within the mind that inspires his poetry captures the possibility of there being a temple within me.

Though in the last part of this chapter I am calling upon one of the most cited of European poets, I wish to be modest and simply follow Rilke's thought for my love of it and what it can teach me about possibilities for saying who I am and who I might be becoming. Kline comments that Rilke was

so threatened by the real and philosophical fragility of our existence, and the nausea and terror which that fragile existence can generate, he sought through mind and poetry a view of life which might offset the pain. The Elegies are that view.
(<http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/German/TheFountainOfJoy.htm> Introduction, 2009)

Rilke aimed not for religious conciliation but for conciliation of spirituality with life. He seeks in the interior of our lives ways that can change one's view of being. In a letter of 1923, Rilke writes,

Whoever does not sometimes give full consent, and a joyous consent, to the dreadfulness of life, can never possess the unutterable richness and power of existence, can only walk at its edge, and one day, when judgement is given, will have been neither living nor dead.(in Kline, 2009)

I cannot think of a more poignant way to come to the closing of my thesis than to have those words from Rilke for company. My research has shown me how, if not it has required me, to gain entry to my inner temple, to that place inside my being-self that I ought to consecrate as a vital source of compassion for my fellow beings.

My research beseeches me to give full consent to the challenge of every day, to be fully present in encounters with my clients and others I meet. More than that, as Jaspers encourages trenchantly, I am to continue to discover the depths of my present in the foundations of my past, and in the realms of possibilities from which my future is coming (1971).

In the autobiographical unravelling of my life as counsellor, I have indeed risked coming across as self-centred, but I do believe that this self-study, this partial autobiography, has wider relevance, and I wish to claim to wider universality in its significance for being a counsellor with people who are in deep throes of grief and loss. My task has been to transform the being of my self into being in the world of my mind, into consciousness and becoming. This task has been sometimes

weariness, sometimes despairing, sometimes jubilant and often soothing. In the distance, space and time I have travelled with this thesis, practising, reading and writing for a number of years, I hope that others will find insight, understanding, intellectual and professional support, heart and inspiration.

The nautilus and the chalice

Symbols, images and language disclose features of my heeding consciousness throughout this thesis. Kline's commentary on Rilke's first Elegy, raises even more my consciousness of the weight of personal, social and philosophical meaning that concepts and symbols carry.

...that weight is greater than the individual and yet within the individual. So that the mind's being in the world and the world's being in the mind are complementary, indissoluble aspects of thought and feeling. (Kline, 2009)

For the poet, Wendell Holmes, the nautilus creature spirals its world into a domed temple from which it eventually sets itself free in the foaming seas. In the beds of the seas we find chalices of coral filled to the brim with intoxicating, mesmerising colours. The nautilus shell is a metaphor for the movement of unfolding understandings of self as counsellor. 'Chalice' comes from the Latin *calix*, mug, borrowed from Greek *kalyx*, shell, or husk. The coral sea chalice stands in the centre of a metaphorical altar of a temple and receives, holds and offers the sacrament of life. The chalice offers me a metaphor to bring together the fragments of life's fragility that haunts the pages of my thesis. As I contemplate the



notion of what a chalice represents symbolically, I find myself cupping my hands as if in extension of my heart. And I ask what is so acutely appealing about this metaphor? What am I bringing together to hold in my cupped hands that could be a chalice in offering?

My cupped hands, held open at my heart, signify a conscious gesture for holding and keeping the relationships I have with myself as counsellor and with my clients. In my cupped hands I hold conversations that are robust, rigorous in their

methodology and leaning towards the truthfulness of human stories. Manualised counselling techniques, though I appreciate and know them, have slipped through my fingers that instead cup into a kind of chalice, still in expectation of alms, in gratitude for what is disclosed to me, and in offering that to the world. Into my cupped hands, I receive from my trials and tribulations during years of counselling something akin to practical moral wisdom. From my cupped hands, I am ready to offer empathy and unconditional positive regard for my clients and to extend to them genuine human compassion to assist their healing from the worst kind of despair, the worst kind of loss human beings can suffer.



My cupped hands

kind of

The nautilus and chalice have a kind of strangeness as symbols and images in my inquiry but they assist me to express something from within. They assist in the struggle of writing and in proving the likelihood of the truthfulness of the story of my unfolding. They assist the struggle with the poetics of narrative that I choose and with which I hope to have succeeded. Such symbols, images and language have helped me to understand why I might refuse to acquiesce to authorities in counselling worlds, without reflecting deeply. I come to understand metaphor as a way of reaching out to talk or laugh with another human being. I would hope that, at least, part of the work of my thesis offers something of what Rilke gives. From his willingness to face up to pain and suffering in his own life and the swiftness of life's passing, Rilke gives "a perhaps clearer meaning to endurance" (Kline, 2009).

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